



# Newsletter

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Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development

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## EDITORIAL

We are pleased to bring this issue of LI-BIRD's newsletter including feature article with highlights of the key achievements and successes of lease-based vegetable farming. The outcome presented in this issue is based on the project implemented by LI-BIRD in partnership with other organisations in Western Nepal. Leasing of land by poor, excluded and marginalised communities for vegetable cultivation and small enterprises is effective, and the outcomes are encouraging.

Lease-based farming associated with small enterprises has indeed provided various options and opportunities for poor households to strengthen their key assets such as repairing and building homes, and purchasing assets such as radio, television and bicycle. Many families have now started to sending their children to school, as well as meet other demands. Case studies documented by the project also show remarkable progress made in empowering communities and leading them to social transformation. This approach has high potential for wider dissemination in poverty prone areas of Nepal.



## NEWS AND EVENTS

### WORKSHOP ON DEVELOPING COURSE CURRICULUM ON AGROBIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

LI-BIRD and Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS), Rampur, jointly organised a one-day workshop on 26 December 2008 to develop course curriculum on Agrobiodiversity Management. The programme was chaired by Prof. Dr. Sundar Man Shrestha, Dean-IAAS, with Dr. Pratap Kumar Shrestha, Executive Director-LI-BIRD as Chief Guest. Sixty participants attended the programme representing various organisations including IAAS, LI-BIRD, National Agricultural Research Council (NARC), South Asian Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), ECOSCENTRE, District Forest Office, District Agricultural Development Office (DADO), NCDC and the media. The major outputs of the programme were finalisation of a course curriculum on Agrobiodiversity Management (ABM) for B.Sc. Agriculture and preparation of a draft course curriculum for M.Sc. Agriculture.



*Prof. Dr. Sundar Man Shrestha, Dean-IAAS, inaugurating the workshop*

## TRAINING ON COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION (CBA) TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The South Asian Regional pilot training on Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change was organised in Pokhara from 9-13 January 2009. The training aimed to enhance capacity of different stakeholders on climate change issues, frameworks, tools and techniques, and to facilitate planning and designing of community-based adaptation.



*Participants of the training on Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change in Pokhara*

The training was jointly organised by LI-BIRD, Practical Action, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), The Development Fund-Norway, and Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS). 35 participants from Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and Bhutan participated in the training. The training was facilitated by BCAS and ICIMOD.

## ANNUAL REVIEW AND PLANNING MEETING OF RIU PROJECTS

LI-BIRD and FORWARD organised an Annual Review and Planning Meeting on "Promoting New Rice and Legume Variety Developed from COB" and "Poverty Reduction through Crop Intensification of Rice Fallows" RiU projects from 3-6 February 2009 in Chitwan. There were 82 participants in the meeting including DADO from 17 Terai Districts, two respective Regional Agricultural Directorate (RAD) representatives, Development of Agriculture (DoA), NARC (NORP and NGLRP), FORWARD, LI-BIRD, IAAS, SEAN, ANSAB and farmers from

project districts. The meeting reviewed RiU project approaches, guiding principles, and progress to date. CoB Rice variety to be included in the coming season was also identified during the meeting.

## COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION CONFERENCE IN BANGLADESH

The Third International Workshop on Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change was held at the Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 18-24 February 2009. The event was organised by the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), IIED and the RING Alliance of Policy Research Organisations. It was co-sponsored by the British High Commission in Bangladesh, CARE Bangladesh, Christian Aid UK, The Danish Embassy in Bangladesh, FAO, Oxfam-GB, Practical Action UK, and WWF UK.

The event included a three-day field visit to observe community-based adaptation (CBA) initiatives in project sites. This was followed by three days of interactive workshop discussions in Dhaka. The aim of the event was to share the latest developments in adaptation planning and practices at different levels, and to disseminate knowledge among stakeholders for integrating adaptation into national and international development programmes. More than 140 participants GOs, NGOs, CBOs, research institutions, UN agencies and development organisations participated in the workshop, along with grassroots and development practitioners and the media. LI-BIRD shared its experiences on agro-biodiversity and climate change issues in the conference.



*Community Based Adaptation Conference in Bangladesh*

## LEADERSHIP CHANGE IN LI-BIRD

**M**s. Rajju Malla-Dhakal has taken the responsibility as the new Executive Director of LI-BIRD since 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2009. Ms. Dhakal has taken over the leadership from Dr. Pratap Kumar Shrestha who served in LI-BIRD as Executive Director for more than 5 years. Dr. Shrestha has assumed a short term new responsibility of Technical Advisor at LI-BIRD. Ms. Dhakal has both national and international experiences working with civil society, bilateral donors and UN agencies. She has experiences and expertise in public policy, governance, environment management and rural development.



*Dr. Pratap Kumar Shrestha (Left) handing over responsibility of Executive Director to Ms. Rajju Malla Dhakal (Right)*

## ANNUAL PLANNING AND REVIEW MEETING- 2009/10

**L**I-BIRD organised its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Review and Planning Meeting (ARPM) from 12-14 April 2009 at Dragon Hotel, Pokhara. Ms. Rajju Malla Dhakal, Executive Director, welcomed the participants and highlighted the objectives of the event. She emphasised the importance of the annual review of progress and achievements including key outputs and outcomes. She also suggested for future focus on outcome and impact based project reviews. The meeting has been a good platform for LI-BIRD staffs to share and learn knowledge, experiences and good practices from various programmes/projects. The meeting also provided an opportunity to document information for the annual report and to prepare Annual Work Programme for LI-BIRD.



*A glimpse of Annual Review and Planning Meeting (ARPM), 2009*

The meeting was attended by all officer-level staff, support staff including field-based staff. Mr Krishna Prasad Baral and Mr Badri Sitaula, Executive Board Members of LI-BIRD, provided constructive comments and input for improvement of projects and programmes.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### EXPLORING VIABLE OPTIONS TO SECURE LIVELIHOODS OF DALITS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

**A**griculture is the key sector that determines economic growth, employment and livelihood security of the majority of small landholders and resource-poor farmers in Nepal. Around 66% of actively employed people are engaged in agriculture, which contributes to 32% of their gross domestic product (GDP). However, the majority of small and marginal farming families are poor and vulnerable and practice traditional and subsistence-oriented agriculture. Most such households are ethnic minorities, Dalits, or headed by women. To address food insecurity among the poor, LI-BIRD has been implementing a project entitled "Improving Livelihood Security of Socially Excluded Communities of Nepal" since April 2006 in partnership with Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO) and Practical Action Nepal, with financial support from the European Commission. The main objective of the project is to improve livelihoods of vulnerable and socially excluded communities (i.e. Dalits and ethnic minorities) in six conflict-affected districts (Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Banke, Surkhet, Kailali and Doti) of Western Nepal.

Good practices of leased-based commercial vegetable production and other agriculture related income generation activities for landless and small farmers, developed by LI-BIRD through a project support by Plan Nepal, Sunsari district, were scaled up in this project. Participatory planning and monitoring, action-oriented research and demonstration, promotion of self-help groups, capacity building, collaboration and networking were adopted as major project strategies.

### Project Contributions

The project achieved notable results through implementation of different kinds of economic and social activities. Major contributions are highlighted below.

### Economic change

Income among target beneficiaries steadily increased through leased-based vegetable production, semi-commercial vegetable production, fish farming, goat farming and mushroom production. The mid-term evaluation report indicated that financial status of beneficiaries improved (*see the table below*), and their income doubled. The project created employment opportunities to 1,920 households (Dalits, ethnic minorities and others) through various farm-based income generating activities. Migration of local people to India for employment decreased. Farmers who earlier practiced share-cropping were able to establish themselves as leasehold farmers. Food sufficiency among many families increased from below three months to eight



A farmer in her leased farm

months. Families were also financially able to send their children to school. Interestingly, farmers who used to send their children to government schools were also able to afford private schools for better quality education.

### Change in economic condition of beneficiaries

Name of Farmer	Before Project		After Project	
	Major sources of income	Total income (NRs)	Major sources of income	Total income (NRs)
Malati B.K.	Labour	27,500	Vegetable+ Labour	27,500
Bashanti Kuhar	Labour	25,000	Fish+Labour	35,000
Munlahun B.K.	Labour	22,500	Fish+Labour	30,000
Tribeni Harijan	Labour	22,500	Vegetable+ Labour	31,500
Bhagavan Das Yadav	Labour	17,500	Vegetable+ Labour	33,500
Jabahir Harijan	Labour	17,500	Vegetable+ Labour	45,000
Netra Bdr. B.K.	Labour	35,000	Bicycle trailer	60,000
Kumari Pariyar	Labour	17,500	Labour	17,500
Shova Rujal	Labour	17,500	Labour	17,500
Chhabi Lal Bhusal	Labour	17,500	Vegetable+ Tenant	45,000
Rum Bdr. B.K.	Labour	17,500	Vegetable+ Tenant	45,000
Sumi Bote	Labour	17,500	Vegetable+ Labour	27,500
Suk Maya Kumal	Labour	17,500	Vegetable+ Labour	32,500
Tek B. Budha	India+ Cereal	22,000	Vegetable	52,000
Nar B. Shahi	Tenant+ Cereal	12,000	Vegetable+ Cereal	23,500
Sarita Gharti	Tenant	7,000	Vegetable	22,000
Average		19,594		34,219
Average change in income				14,625

### Social change

The social and political status of beneficiaries were enhanced through implementation of community-based saving and credit schemes, participatory meeting for decision-making, community action plan, group management and leadership development, and record keeping training in groups. These group activities enhanced their capacity to function as members in school management committees, community forestry committees, users' committee, and cooperatives. This also positively

affected social changes through acceptance of the Dalits (untouchable ethnic groups) for participation in community groups and construction committees of improved traditional water mills and irrigation schemes.

Besides these tangible outcomes, there were social changes such as increased 'team building' and cooperation among farmers, enhanced inter-group interactions between Dalits and other groups, and collection of savings. Regular group meetings also provided forums to share information and experiences, particularly among women.

More importantly, participation of farmers in various types of trainings was perceived to be helpful in gaining knowledge, skills and confidence. As a result, technical capacity of farmers increased and they were able to shift from their traditional occupation to agriculture-based IFAs. Groups also increased their capacity in market management, including market information and price determination based on current market prices through the local FM broadcasting centres.

Target beneficiaries increased their linkages and coordination with related stakeholders. Many of them now know where to go for technical services besides the project. They have better access to services from both government (DDC, DADO, and DLSO) and non-government sectors. As a result, there has been increased interaction between farmers and service-providers through stakeholder field visits. Registration of groups in DADO and Regional Fisheries Development Centre is also an evidence of their expanded network. Furthermore, development banks such as Gaurishankar Bank and Siddhartha Bikas Bank in Nawalparasi and Rupandehi have offered credit facilities to farmers.

### Changes in lifestyle

Farmers have increased their physical assets: cycle, cows, buffaloes, and mobile phones. Most of them replaced thatched roofs with galvanised steel sheets. These are some of the examples showing that the project has contributed positively on life and livelihoods of poor and marginal farmers. Participating households were also able to lease additional land with their income. On an average, each farmer leased 5 kattha (about 1700 m<sup>2</sup>) land for vegetable production in Nawalparasi. Some farmers

even purchased land with their income. Mr. Likhi Ram Tharu, member of Guruwagaon Leasehold Vegetable Production Group, Bankatwa VDC, Banke, purchased one kattha and five dhur land (423 m<sup>2</sup>).

### Conclusion

The project has made significant contribution towards improving sustainable livelihoods of socially-excluded communities (Dalit and ethnic minorities) through agriculture-based income generation activities. Moreover, technological, social, and economic assets of target beneficiaries have been strengthened.

The beneficiaries have improved their capacity in agriculture farming. As a result, they have good income and food security for six to eight months. Levels of vegetable consumption, as well as crop diversity and intensity have also been increased among participating households, contributing to improved food security and family nutrition. Project beneficiaries have been able to improve their physical assets from their income.

An important lesson learned from the project is that lease-based market oriented vegetable and mushroom production is beneficial to small landholding farmers. For long-term sustainability of leasehold farming, it is essential to prepare long-term lease arrangements with landowners that allow farmers to continue farming in the same land. Lease-based commercial vegetable production can be further scaled up and widely disseminated to improve sustainable livelihoods of socially-excluded communities.



*A farmer with his marketable products*

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

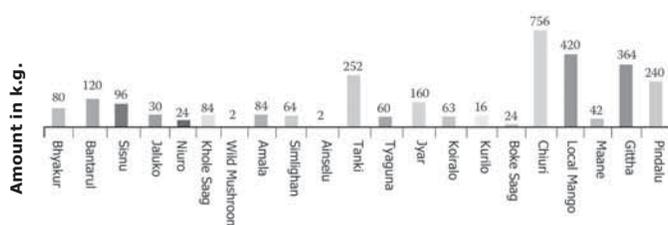
### CHEPANG PEOPLE AND WILD FOODS

This research highlight is the output of the project on Land Use Transition and Human Health jointly implemented by LI-BIRD, ICIMOD and regional partners, with financial support from International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The research was carried out focusing Chepang communities in five villages: Kholagaun and Rasoli of Tanahun District, and Thumka, Hiklung and Ghyalchowk of Gorkha District. Transdisciplinary, participatory and community-driven approaches were used to achieve project objectives. Various participatory and physical assessment methods were used for data collection. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of data was done using statistical software (SPSS and MS-Excel). This article highlights only the nutritional aspect of this research.

Among 115 Chepang households, 96 households (83.5%) owned shifting cultivation land. The Chepang community has a tradition of consuming wild foods as their agricultural production is sufficient only for about five months in a year. A total of 21 types of wild food was documented: *Chiuri* (*Diploknema butyraceae* (Rox.) Lam.), local mango (*Mangifera indica* (L.)), *Gittha* (*Dioscorea bulbifera* L.), *Tanki* (*Bauhinia purpurea*), *Pindalu* (*Colossia spp.*), *Bantarul* (*Dioscorea spp.*), *Bhyakur* (*Dioscorea deltoidea* Wall Ex Griseb.), *Sisnu* (*Urtica dioica*), *Jaluko* (*Colocassia esculenta* var *aquatilis*), *Kalo Niuro* (*Deparia boryana* Wild.), *Khole Saag* (*Nasturtium officinale*), *Amala* (*Phyllanthus emblica*), *Ban Kurilo* (*Asparagus filicinus*), *Sipligan* (*Crateva religiosa* Foster F.), *Ainselu* (*Rubus ellipticus*), *Koiralo* (*Bauhinia variegata*) and *Maane* (*Colocassia spp.*). The average amount of wild food extracted by the Chepang is presented in the figure below.

Mean amount of wild foods extracted annually by Chepang people.



Rhizomous wild food contains high percentage of crude carbohydrate (81.45%) relative to other nutrient components. The percentage of crude fat, crude fibre, crude protein and total ash is 0.39%, 9%, 1.39% and 7.77%, respectively.

Leafy vegetable wild food also contains high percentage of crude carbohydrate (63.92%), but this amount is less than in rhizomous wild food. The percentage of crude fat, crude fibre, crude protein and total ash is 0.76%, 14.49%, 3.10% and 17.73%, respectively. This is higher than in rhizomous wild food.

The amount of time needed to collect enough wild food to feed an entire family for a day has increased in comparison to previous decades. This indicates that there may be less wild food available in their territory. The Chepang communities attributed this decrease to loss of forest cover and reduced fallow periods in shifting cultivation practice.

Analysis of food intake among Chepang communities indicates that they do not achieve a balanced diet. The decreased availability of wild food is further preventing them from achieving adequate nutritional requirements.

Considering the food insufficiency and malnutrition in the Chepang people, integrated programmes to increase the dietary diversity, enhance the community awareness on health issues and reduce the malnutrition particularly among children and women are highly recommended for next phase.



A Chepang woman with her children.

## SUCCESS STORY



### KHEM LAL CHAUDHARY: A SUCCESSFUL VEGETABLE CULTIVATION ENTREPRENEUR

**K**hem Lal Chaudhary lives in Ghodsuwa village of Beladevipur VDC in Kailali District, at a distance of approximately 7 km north from the District Headquarter Dhangadhi. He has a large family with 16 members. His family used to depend on five kattha land (around 1,700 m<sup>2</sup>). With added pressure to feed his large family, he also used to cultivate land of a local landlord on share-cropping basis. Despite this, his harvests were insufficient to feed his family for an entire year. To meet other household expenses, such as medicine, clothing and socio-cultural expenses, he used to take loans from local moneylenders. Earlier, Khem Lal had tried cultivating vegetables on his land but had failed due to lack of knowledge on market oriented vegetable production techniques.

After participating in the leasehold vegetable programme, Khem Lal produces and sells vegetables from which he earns a cash income of about to 40 thousand rupees annually. Being an active and laborious farmer, his group has selected him as the lead farmer of the village. The increased income has brought positive changes in his life and family. With the income, he constructed one toilet and installed one biogas plant. He also repaired and converted his cycle into a cycle-trailer which he uses to transport vegetables to the local market.

Khem Lal proudly states, "Now, I do not have to go to local moneylenders and beg for loans. I have a balance of 30 thousand rupees in a local bank, and this I can use during crisis and emergency. "

## PUBLICATION CORNER

### BRIEFING-PAPER:

Publication : Janakari Patra:  
Jalabayu Paribartan  
(Vol. 2, Chaitra-2065)

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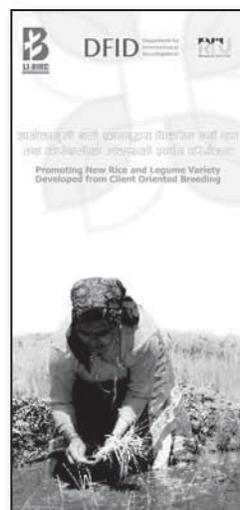
Project : EMIS



### PROJECT BROCHURE:

Publication : Promoting New Rice and  
Legume Variety  
Developed from Client  
Oriented Breeding

Project : RIU



### CALENDAR:

Publication : Nepali Calendar  
of LI-BIRD-2066



Publication : Sunaulo Sugandha Dhan  
Ra Esko Kheti-Prabidhi

Project : RIU

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## Staff Corner

### Incoming Staff

LI-BIRD family hearty welcomes the following new staff members.

- Rajju Malla-Dhakal, Executive Director - (20 February 2009)
- Mahesh Shrestha, TIP Officer - (22 February 2009)
- Deepak Upadhyay, Project Officer - (29 March 2009)
- Barun Dev Acharya, Project Officer - (29 March 2009)
- Shanti Ale, Project Officer - (7 April 2009)

### Outgoing Staff

LI-BIRD family extends its best wishes to the following staff members who have left organization after their successful tenure.

- Lalita Thapa, Project Officer - (18 March 2009)
- Matilal Dhakal, Project Officer
- Shree Bhagwan Thakur, Programme Officer - (4 May 2009)



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Mr. Chuda Raj Giri - Feature Article  
and Success Story