

Incubating Leadership through Farmer's Field School

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The Sowing Diversity=Harvesting Security project envisions empowering women and young people as a crucial aspect of effectively managing and using plant genetic resources for food and nutrition security. The project builds farmers' capacity for participatory agrobiodiversity management and plant breeding through the Farmer's Field School (FFS) methodology. Gender equality and social inclusion are at the core of many FFS interactions. FFS members are sensitized and capacitated to identify, discuss, and resolve gender-related issues prevailing in their lives. FFS members are trained, encouraged, and provided opportunities to raise their voices, perform as local leaders, and deliver social justice within their group and community. In a recent local election in Nepal, 5 FFS members (4 women) secured leadership positions as elected personnel. These elected members believed that the FFS helped them improve their leadership and interpersonal skills, which enabled them to be elected. This result sets an example of women's and youth empowerment within the project. These leaders made a commitment to promote sustainable management of agro-biodiversity at the local level. The project team is certain that they will be a catalyst for change.

"FFS provided me the hope and excitement to work with community people & has supported me to be in this position."



Ms. Krishna Deuba is an elected ward member of ward no. 2 of the Ganyapdhura Rural Municipality of Dadeldhura district. Ms. Deuba is a FFS facilitator on nutrition and local food plants and also co-facilitates the Ritha Women FFS group in Dadeldhura. She works with the women's group FFS on identifying the important local food plants and conducted a FFS on barley to increase the seed availability and co-create new recipes for the barley grain. She claims her continuous engagement in FFS provides an opportunity to discuss and learn about gender issues and socio-economic dynamics related to them. She believes that the FFS platform helped her to enhance her confidence to attempt the election and get elected. She stated that *"FFS provided me with the hope and excitement to work with community people and has supported me to be in this position."* She is determined to promote agro-biodiversity, social justice, and capacity building of socially excluded groups, especially women.

- Ms Krishna Deuba, Ward Member, Ward no. 2.

"Weekly interaction with farmers in FFS helped to grow leadership skills within me and inspire me to work with community people"

Ms. Indra Oli is a newly elected ward member of ward No. 1 of the Jorajal Rural Municipality of Doti District. Ms. Oli is chairperson of Deep Jyoti Female Empowerment FFS in the SD=HS project, Nepal. She acknowledges that the FFS platform has helped her gain more confidence and speaking ability in public. She stated that *"Weekly interaction with farmers in FFS helped to grow leadership skills within me and inspired me to work with community people."* She added that the FFS sessions had improved her understanding of gender and societal issues. She is committed to exploring and resolving social and gender-related issues within her community and continuing her involvement in FFS.



- Ms Indra Oli, Ward Member, Ward no. 1, Jorajal RMC, Doti

"FFS provided me the opportunity to interact with many people and helped to enhance my capacity to be elected in this position."



Mr. Mohan Singh Badayak is an elected youth ward representative of ward No. 3 of the Laljhadi Rural Municipality of Kanchanpur District. Mr. Badayak is a facilitator of Himal Posan FFS on nutrition and local food plants at Laljhadi, Kanchanpur. Through the SD=HS project, he got opportunities to participate in various capacity trainings, orientations, and exposure visits. He believes his continuous engagement in FFS has helped him to increase his involvement in community-level work, get acquainted with many local people, and increase his self-confidence in public speaking. He extends his gratitude to the project team and FFS platform, saying, *"FFS gave me the opportunity to interact with many people and helped to enhance my capacity to be elected in this position."* He is committed to working further on the conservation and promotion of local crop varieties and foods, especially those that have cultural importance in the Tharu community.

- Mr. Mohan Singh Badayak, Ward Member, Ward no. 3 Laljhadi RMC, Kanchanpur

"FFS helped to grow my interest in community development & supported me to be elected as a ward member."

Ms. Dhyanmati Devi Rana is a newly elected young representative of Chandev, ward no. 6 of the Laljhadi Rural Municipality of Doti District. Ms. Rana is one of the FFS facilitators on PPB in the SD=HS project. She is continuously facilitating FFS on rice and wheat, and leading gender journeys exercise to increase equality between men and women in FFS. She is currently facilitating discussions on gender issues and has resolved household-level problems for some of her FFS members. Ms. Rana believes FFS has greatly helped her to develop communication and group mobilization skills. She said with a smile, *"FFS helped to grow my interest in community development and supported me in being elected as a ward member. I will continue my participation in FFS and pass my learning on to other people. I would like to thank SD=HS for providing me the opportunity to grow myself."* As a women's leader, she is committed to advocating for social and gender justice within the community.



- Ms Dhyanmati Devi Rana, Ward Member, Ward no. 6, Laljhadi RMC, Kanchanpur

"FFS provided me the opportunity to take a leadership position to address our communities' genuine issues for community development."



Ms. Renu Kumari Dagaura is a newly elected ward chairperson of Manikapur, ward no. 3 of Joshipur Rural Municipality of Kailali District. Ms. Dagaura was a FFS facilitator on nutrition and local food plants. She coordinated seed distribution, promotion of local food plants and also ran discussion on gender related issues in her FFS. After being elected, she acknowledged FFS platform saying, *"FFS provided me the opportunity to take a leadership position to address our community's genuine issues for the community development. It has helped to enhance my leadership power and community relation too."* She is determined to promote agro-biodiversity, address social inclusion issues and capacity strengthening of the excluded groups during her term as an elected ward chair.

- Ms Renu Kumari Dagaura, Ward Chairperson, Ward no. 3, Joshipur RMC, Kailali