



Nepal Development Research Institute Livelihoods and Food Security

Livelihoods and food security are intricately related and are important concerns for economy and wellbeing in a developing country like Nepal. Since its founding, NDRI has a rich experience of working on livelihoods and food security.

Livelihoods in Nepal

More than half of Nepal's working population is engaged in agriculture, even though the domestic production is still inadequate to meet the needs of its own population thus the country imports food items worth billions of Rupees every year. Manufacturing sector is stagnant or in decline. Tourism, which has been one of the sources of employment and foreign exchange revenue has also suffered significantly after the Covid-19. Thus, some three million people of working age are working in foreign countries, and remittances from these workers contributes to almost 30 percent of the GDP. A large proportion of those working abroad are in the Middle East or Malaysia, who work for low paid unskilled jobs.

NDRI has conducted a number of studies and assessments on livelihoods of the vulnerable populations and provided recommendations at the policy level. These include appraisal of the Karnali employment programme, study on the migration as a means to coping in times of crisis and impact of the Karnali highway on livelihoods and food security; implications of road connectivity on local livelihoods; and national living standards survey (NLSS IV) in collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO).

Nepal's food security journey

While Nepal needs to accelerate its efforts to eliminate hunger, especially because the right to food security of households has been enlisted as the basic right in the constitution, and in the context of Zero Hunger as one of the important goals of SDG, the country has made a significant progress in the past two decades. Currently at the moderate level of hunger as per the global hunger index (GHI), Nepal's situation is relatively better than its neighbouring South Asian countries. Various programmatic interventions by the Government and the development partners, including social protection coverage may be attributed to this progress, and evidence and information generated from various studies and assessments have served as the foundation to guide them. NDRI as one of the organizations providing such evidence feels privileged to be part of this journey.



Food Security

Since its founding in 2004, NDRI has been one of the main organizations in Nepal, providing important evidence for food security policies and programmes, through numerous studies, assessments and policy level interactions. For instance, in collaboration with the National Planning Commission, NDRI and WFP jointly produced the first food security atlas of Nepal in 2010, providing a broad snapshot of the food security situation in Nepal. Published in both Nepali and English languages, this has been a widely used document in Nepal. An updated of this has been published in 2019 with more recent data. NDRI and WFP jointly produced a report on the impact of soaring food prices on food security in Nepal in the context of global food price hike in 2008. In 2008, NDRI and WFP also produced a report on the implication of migration on food security focusing on the vulnerable households in the Karnali and Far Western mountain districts.

Focus on the Vulnerable

In its various studies, particularly related to livelihoods and food security, NDRI has made special efforts in highlighting the needs of the most vulnerable. This includes understanding and presenting the problem from a gender perspective, highlighting the situation of remote underserved areas such as Karnali province and vulnerabilities associated with ethnicity or disaster prone areas. For instance, NDRI together with ICIMOD conducted poverty and vulnerability assessment and monitoring in districts of Koshi basin for a few rounds. Similarly NDRI has also worked on community based early warning and response system in the flood prone areas of Rapti basin in Banke and Koshi Basin) NDRI also has conducted disaster related study in collaboration with Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN).

Climate and Food Security: Disaster, particularly the climate shocks are important drivers of food insecurity in Nepal. NDRI has conducted a number of assessments on vulnerabilities of the populations due to disasters, including earthquake of 2015, and the climate induced disasters such as flood and landslides. Livelihoods and food security team of NDRI works closely with the water and climate team led by Dr. Divas Basnyat and the disaster team led by Prof. Dr.Tara Nidhi Bhattarai.

Field surveys: Field surveys provide important insights to understand the state of livelihoods and food security. NDRI has a capacity to conduct field surveys of various types, nationwide or any given areas, with its extensive experience over the last two decades. NDRI had dedicated staff to design and lead such field surveys while it currently has a roster of more than four hundred enumerators available for field work in any part of Nepal. Depending on the context and requirement of the study, NDRI has conducted such surveys successfully in a variety of methods including paper based household surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions; tablet or mobile phone based surveys; or computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI).

NDRI livelihoods and food security team

NDRI is privileged to have a team of distinguished professionals with recognized expertise on food security and livelihoods. While the core team includes the following persons, there is a roster of some 40 experts and about 400 field surveyors available to provide inputs on a needs basis.

- Krishna Pahari, Ph.D. (Food security and vulnerability) – team lead
- Gopal KC, Ph.D. (Agriculture)
- Manjeshwori Singh, Ph.D. (Gender and livelihoods)
- Rabita Shrestha Mulmi, Ph.D. (Gender and livelihoods)
- Sunil Babu Shrestha, Ph.D. (Urban food security – green city)
- Shreya Bajimaya, Senior Research Associate
- Rajendra Khatri, Senior Research Associate
- Ram Pd. Devkota, Research Associate/Field Survey Coordinator
- Divya Laxmi Subedi- GIS Specialist

Partnership and collaboration

Achieving sustainable and dignified livelihoods and food security of the populations is only possible with an effective partnership and coordination among the stakeholders. NDRI in its two decades of existence has built extensive partnership with many organizations in Nepal and abroad. Particularly related to livelihoods and food security, various Government institutions with which NDRI has worked include the National Planning Commission, Central Bureau of Statistics, Karnali Provincial Planning Commission, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Ministry of Health, Social Services Commission and local governments. Similarly, NDRI has worked with international development partners including WFP, UNICEF, FAO, ICIMOD, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Practical Action, CCAFS/CGIAR, Planete Enfants and Development, UN Women and Population Services International. NDRI has also been collaborating with academia such as Nepal Open University, Kathmandu University, Asian Institute of Technology, University of Tokyo and Kansas State University.

Interdisciplinary approach

Understanding livelihoods and food security require expertise from different disciplines and the programming interventions also require inter-sectoral coordinated approach. Therefore, NDRI’s livelihoods and food security team works closely with other programmes of NDRI utilizing their inputs and expertise as needed. Mainly, the team works closely with the climate and water team led by Dr. Divas Basnyat, disaster risk management team led by Dr. Tara Nidhi Bhattarai; and health and environment team led by Dr. Jaya Kumar Gurung. Similarly, the team is also supported by the ICT team led by Santosh Mahato, particularly for information management and computer based surveys.

