



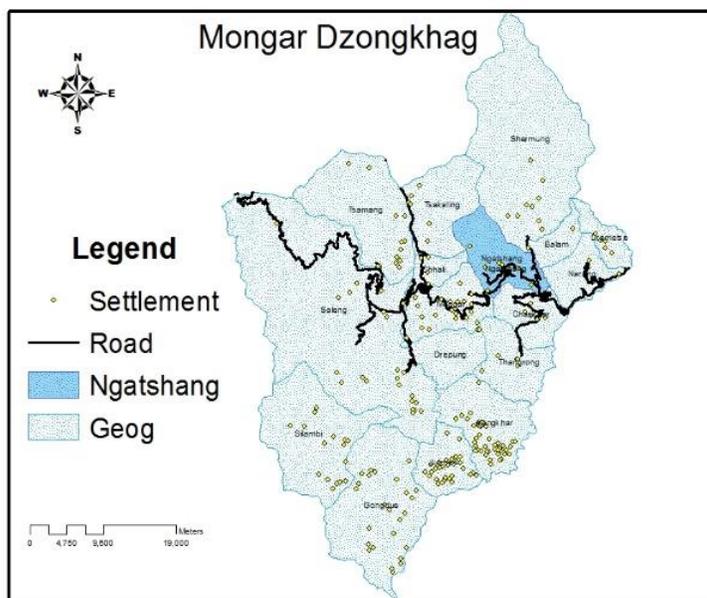
A Case of the ‘Women-led Yoekhar Vegetable Production and Marketing Group’ of Yadhi, Mongar.

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Women’s vegetable group performing well, taking the case of Yoekhar Vegetable Group of Ngatshang geog, Mongar.

1. Rationale:

Yoekhar is a village under Ngatshang geog of Mongar Dzongkhag with a total of 96 HHs. The village is located close to Yadhi Central School and also along the Mongar-Trashigang National Highway, providing the village with an easy market. Topographically, the village falls under the sub-tropical Agro-ecological zone, which is suitable for the growth of various vegetables.



Reaping the potentiality of the topographic location and also the easy market, Yoekhar village alone has three Vegetable Groups, of which the ‘Yoekhar Vegetable and Marketing Group’ is one.

This Yoekhar Vegetable and Marketing Group was first formed in 2013 under the facilitation of the Geog Agriculture Extension Officer

(GAEO) after the members confronted their willingness to form the group. The Group is then successfully formed with 11 female and 1 male. All the three executive members (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) of the group are women. Thus, Yoekhar Vegetable and Marketing Group is a typical case of women-led Farmers’ Group.

In 2016, the group formally got registered with RAMCO (Regional Agriculture and Marketing Cooperative). The group gathers twice a year under the leadership of the GAEO to revisit their bylaws and deliberate all the matters associated with the group.

The overall gist of the Group:

The group grows all kinds of seasonal vegetables (cabbage, cauliflower, chili, brinjal, saag, ginger, peas, radish, pumpkin, cucumber, carrot, beans and potatoes.) The Group markets these vegetables mostly to the Yadhi Central School through a 'Farmer-school linkage' programme. The technical assistance to the group is mostly provided by the GAE0; *Ms. Kencho Peldon*.

In the 2014-15FY, each member of the group received a bundle of elastic watering pipes, sprinklers, electric dryers and the potato chips making a machine from MAGIP. The executive members also received a book-keeping training.

1. Production and the income status:

According to the production record of the GAE0, this women-led Yoekhar Vegetable Production and Marketing Group has produced 14730.5 kilograms of vegetable in the year 2016 excluding the 25% of the total harvest which was used for the home consumption and other domestic purposes like gifting to the close ones.

The Group reports that the production trend of the vegetables is increasing over every subsequent year because of the ready-market. The location of the village near the Mongar-Trashigang highway and the small town of Yadhi has added the market assurance.

Similarly, from the record of Geog Extension Agent, the group has Nu.267, 248/- in their Group saving account as of 2016, summing up the savings since the first formation of the Group. The group earns a minimum of Nu. 1500/- at one supplying week to the Yadhi Central School.

2. Group contract with school:

The group has signed the 'Vegetable Supply Contract' with Yadhi Central School in 2013. The group supplies the vegetables to the school on a weekly basis. But there are two other groups which also supplies the vegetables to the same school on a rotational basis.

Therefore, Yoekhar Vegetable and Marketing Group gets to supply the vegetable once in three weeks which gives enough time for the vegetables to get ripped/matured from the previous harvest.

There is no fixed quantity to be supplied. It all depends on the balance or the remaining from the previous supply. This means if the school has enough surplus of vegetables from the previous week, they take less supply from the next group.

The school makes the payment at the end of the month. The chairperson of the Group reports that the Group earns a minimum of Nu. 1500 at one supplying week.

According to the group members, the formation of the FGs has helped them to earn more cash income and reduced the need to do the off-farm labors. Moreover, the commercialization of the vegetables in the village has started only after the group formation and establishing the linkage with School. Prior to the group formation, the farmers used to produce the vegetables just for the domestic consumption.

3. Gender Challenges:

Despite that the group is formed and led by the women members whose potential in labor force especially in the manual works is apparently considered to have less impact, the group reports that they haven't faced any challenges even for any physical/manual works. The group hasn't experienced any gender-related and social challenges.

The group gets an equal access to all the input capitals such as land, water, market and other social assets like any other groups. The three executive members of the group mobilize the group's accountancy and transparency.

4. Other Challenges:

As per the report of the Geog Extension Agent, the group hasn't experienced any major challenges except that of water unavailability during the peak vegetable seasons, when all other farmers are also doing the same vegetable farming.

Along with this, the group has experienced the decaying of the vegetables especially the perishable items like tomatoes during the summer time, in the absence of continuous sun to dry them. Moreover, the group is experiencing some market competition from the other groups.

5. Group Strengths:

This women-led Yoekhar Vegetable Production and Marketing Group is running as a successful venture with cohesive members, formed and led by 11 women members and one male member.

The book keeping training provided by the MAGIP to the executive members has enriched them to maintain the record of their income, production, investment, time frame etc. It has also accelerated the Accountability and the Transparency which is a powerful essence for the successful group mobilization.

In addition, apart from the Group contract with the school, the women group members are taking their vegetables to the local market. According to the Group's chairperson, 25% of the total produce is taken to the local market on a home delivery mechanism. Such home delivery services have cut-short the market constraints and reduced any form of post-harvest residuals/wastages.

6. Plan ahead of the group:

The group has the plan to capitalize on the already existing strengths like focusing more on home delivery of the vegetables in the local market, targeting to the hotels and restaurants.

In addition, the group is planning to widen their products coverages in the bigger markets like Samdrupjongkhar, Trashigang and Kholonchu Hydro Power Project.

Similarly, the group has the plan to seek for the external assistance to for green houses and off seasonal vegetable varieties.

7. Recommendations:

7.1 Explore for adequate water source- to curb down the inadequate water supply which then limits the production potential, the group can explore for some reliable water source, aiming for the water harvesting mechanisms like a reservoir tank or rain-water harvesting.

7.2 Provision of the water-proof net during rainy seasons- a considerable amount of the harvest is lost in the rainy seasons due to rotting and decaying. The provision of waterproof net especially during the rainy seasons will minimize the losses through decaying and rot.

7.3 Focus on the off season vegetables- the group has the plan to procure some more greenhouses which mean they can also concentrate on doing the off-season vegetables with the input and technical support from the Geogs and the Dzongkhags.

7.4 Explore on the post-harvest diversification- the group has the potential to explore on the post-harvest diversification like drying the vegetables, pickling, jamming, juicing etc.

7.5 In order to withstand the competition from other groups, Yoekhar Vegetable Production and Marketing Group can promote the off-season vegetable varieties and on the varieties

that are not been cultivated by other groups like improved/hybrid vegetable varieties, organically.

8. Conclusion:

The women-led Vegetable Production and Marketing Group of Yoekhar Village under Mongar Dzongkhag with 11 female and one male member is a successful Farmer Group led by women members.

The group is linked with Yadhi Central School in 2013 to supply the vegetables on a weekly basis. They are making a minimum of Nu. 15, 00 at one supplying week.

The group though has the female denomination, they haven't experienced any gender and other social challenges except some water constraints and rotting of vegetables in the rainy seasons.

The group has the potential to diversify the products and has a secured market due to its close location to the National Highway and the semi-Urban town of Yadhi and also because of the Yadhi Central School which provides the Group with enough market opportunities.