Ms Niru Shrestha, an ICS Business Woman

The status of women in Nepal has varied throughout history. Nepal has predominantly been a patriarchal society where women are generally subordinate to men in virtually every aspect of life. Men were considered to be the bread owner of the family. However, the story of Ms. Niru Shrestha is different. Thinning the barrier to gender inequality and following her dream to be a successful business woman, she has achieved the level which her family and society had never imagined. She started business with light lamp in 2062 BS and continued expanding it with mud ICS and later metallic ICS. She received the international honor from ENERGIA/HIVOS Netherland “The ENERGIA Women Entrepreneurships Award 2017” on 5th April, 2017 at the SEforAll Forum, Duggal Greenhouse in Brooklyn, New York due to selling improved cookstoves. Beside the success in business, she is a successful mother and a social worker. She has not only earned money but also recognition and respect in the society.
**Women can lead a business and can earn money**

Only what they require is to have a passion and strong determination. If you are determined, gender inequality will not hinder your business even though you are a woman.

Ms Niru Shrestha, age 48, resident of Sindhuli district, Dhungrebas, Kamalamai Municipality, ward no 4. After marriage in Sindhuli district she worked in Community Forest Group and Alternative Energy Development Programme. Later, she resigned from the job and started business in 2062 BS. Initially she sold light lamp and received training on mud ICS which she said was a turning point for her business. She worked in consensus with Environment, Energy and Climate Change Division, Sindhuli to sell ICS as whole seller. She also received training on metallic ICS organized by Women Economic Empowerment Programme (WEE Nepal), Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal (CRT/N) supported by ENERGIA/Hivos. She also received guidance and mentorship from the WEE Nepal regularly.

**Business modality Followed by Ms. Shrestha in her ICS business**

- Formed group of ICS entrepreneurs trained by WEE Nepal.
- Mobilized those group members as an agent and to be her retailers
- Coordination built up with organizations, NGOs, INGOs, MFIs, LFIs of Sindhuli district
- Interaction at VDC level with women entrepreneurs and local institutions helped to launch activities
- Agreement made with national level dealers (Ajummery Bikas Foundation, Jabari foundation, Smart Chaitya Metal, Matri Bhumi Private Limited) metal, Matri Bhumi private limited) from Kathmandu
- Coordination with representatives of village council
- Interaction with district forest office
- Lobby to involve women entrepreneurs of Sindhuli district as a retailer in business
Diversify your business, never stick on one business

I see money in everything. I run grocery shop at home. I sell vegetables grown at the backyard. I run cow farm, fishery, poultry farm, dock farm and chicken cutting center: Ms Niru Shrestha
Ms Shrestha uses electricity, solar, bio-gas, LPG and ICS in her daily activity. She uses solar and electricity to pump water to irrigate vegetables, feeding cows and for the fish pond. She uses LPG and refrigerator in her chicken cutting centre similarly she uses electric bulb for lightening, heating the poultry farm and operating other appliances. Ms Shrestha says energy is very essential in business, it provides the opportunity to advance the business.

**Without access to energy there is no business**

*Only the better access to energy leads to enhanced entrepreneurship developments, which simultaneously generate growth and improve productivity*

Ms Niru Shrestha is a great example of a true entrepreneur. She has an entrepreneurial spirit and hardworking capacity. She finds opportunity in everything. While interviewing her, she said that she can work and earn money anywhere. According to her there is money in everything if we look it from the business angle. Business opportunities can also be seen in remote areas. Nepal is rich in natural resources. We can sell wood to nearby cities, make compost manure from leafs of tree, can have goat farming, can make tapari (Plate made of leafs) and even can sell the grass.

From the very beginning she worked hard for her children, so that they get a good education and have a better future. Initially she faced financial problems while starting the business but her friends provided the necessary support. The work experience in the field of community forest and in local NGO helped her for establishing network and other information for her business. She worked more than 12 hours a day and earned around 1.5 lakh per month. Her confidence is her strategy for the success; she says there is nothing that holds back a women or men unless they are confident. Other important thing is to have access to finance, which most of the women often lack There should be provisions to easily provide loan to women who are enthusiastic to start business.

She said the journey of her business was interesting and rewarding one. The most memorable moment according to her was when she received the international award at United States. She told that the moment reminded her entire journey, the obstacles and challenges she faced however felt immense pleasure to have the honor. Now, in her society people give example of her as an influential figure. Now business has become her identity in Sindhuli district. Currently, she is the president of Nepal Entrepreneurs Association and has also been involved in various social services.

Prepared by: Gyanu Bist, Communication Officer, GIE Project