



IMPACT STORY

How did Gyan Kumari Shrestha deal with the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Due to COVID-19, women-led small businesses (SMEs) have been disproportionately affected. First, because of the supply-chain disruption, affecting their business and hence their income. Secondly, the pandemic places significant burden on women, who generally are responsible for household chores. The social and economic crisis has thrown them into financial insecurity. In Nepal, only a few entrepreneurs have been able to cope with this difficult situation and continue their businesses. Among those few entrepreneurs, Gyan Kumari Shrestha has explored innovative ways to remain operational during this pandemic.

Gyan Kumari Shrestha is a resident of Baluwa, a small village located in Central Nepal. She has been engaged in the poultry business rearing 3,000 chickens for one and a half years. Gyan was earning well and was very satisfied with her poultry business until the pandemic hit hard in April 2020 and the Government of Nepal imposed a complete lockdown, limiting movements and travels for over 3 months. This had severe consequences on the supply chains of businesses, including the poultry business. One of the major challenges for Gyan was to compensate for the shortage of poultry feed in her village. The lack of food affected the proper growth of chickens, leading to the death of many of them. Moreover, she could not sell her chickens due to travel restrictions. This caused unimaginable losses for her business.

"I was highly upset at one point in time. I was about to give up when Meena Basnet, Enterprise Development Coordinator of the project supporting my business, encouraged and suggested me to explore alternatives for procuring feed. After our conversation, I discussed with my family different options and finally decided to produce feed myself, starting from raw materials such as maize, wheat and peas, sourced locally"

Gyan bought a machine for USD 1,867 to start her new activity. Currently, she is producing 1,000 kg of feed per week. The majority of this feed (around 800-850 Kg) is used for her poultry farm, while she sells the remaining part to nearby poultry entrepreneurs. Due to self-production, she is saving around USD.3.40 per 50 Kg feed. This has not only reduced the costs of production for her own business, but it has also supported other entrepreneurs who are benefitting from locally available feed at a lower price than the market price.

"During the lockdown, I faced massive trouble in buying feed and saw other entrepreneurs also facing the same problem. I started producing feed for chickens from locally available products like maize, grain etc. Nowadays, I don't need to buy it from others. Moreover, I am selling feed to other poultry entrepreneurs in the local areas."

She has recently attended a training on poultry management and feed production, which has helped her to improve the quality of the feed. "As soon as I am confident of meeting the quality standard of the feed, I will increase the production to meet the demand of 3,000 Kg per week in my local area. Over 10 poultry enterprises will benefit from my low-cost and local availability."

