



IMPACT STORY

Local government initiatives supporting women entrepreneurship

Purna Maya Pulami Magar lives in the Godawari Municipality, Lalitpur district, Central Nepal and runs a Lapsi (Hog Plum) Candy Enterprise, together with Laxmi Syangtan and Sabina Ghorasaini, two entrepreneurs living in the same village. The enterprise is a subsidiary company of Sarangi Danda Women Agriculture Cooperative Ltd. which handles operation, management and marketing, while Purna Maya and the team are mainly responsible for collection and processing of Lapsi.

Lapsi is a typical fruit from Nepal and few other Asian countries, used for making candies and pickles. The three entrepreneurs received a Lapsi processing training as part of a rehabilitation program after the earthquake back in 2015. Before the training, they had not realized that they could earn additional money by processing this cheap and easily available fruit.

When they started their enterprise in 2017, the Lapsi pickle did not meet the market quality standards. The following year Purna Maya and the team attended a new training for quality production, after which the pickle was accepted by the local market and were able to make some profits. In the third year, they were able to make a profit of NPR 250,000 (approximately USD 2,000) and now they have even diversified their production, adding six items, all based on Lapsi.

Challenges and mitigation measures

While progress has been made, they are still facing challenges in quality production (for example taste, shelf life and color), packaging and marketing. So when they heard about the project 'Strengthening the Capacity of Nepal's Energy Sector to Deliver Gender Equality

and Social Inclusion Results', they eagerly joined. The project entails business management training, facilitation for market linkages, technical skills training and assistance (such as quality improvement) and mentoring support. The project mentors are supporting the group during each phase of their journey.

Another challenge was registering their business as a subsidiary company of the cooperative. Thanks to the close collaboration with the local government, the Godawari Municipality assisted the team with the registration process, purchase of the machinery equipment and creating conducive business environment in the area.

Future plans

Purna Maya and the team are planning to utilize the financial support received from their Municipality to build a collection and processing unit. They are also working towards expanding the domestic market. Additionally they are planting 5,000 Lapsi trees with the support of the Divisional Forest Office, to whom they have presented another funding proposal for purchasing electricity based equipment.

Finance should never be a barrier for women entrepreneurship

Mr. Giri Prasad Timilsina, Chairperson of the Ward no.7, is enthusiastically supporting women's entrepreneurs. *"Finance should never be a barrier for women entrepreneurship"*, he says. The Ward has allocated NPR 1 million (USD 8,420) to support Lapsi Candy Enterprise. He has further committed to an additional NPR 700,000 (USD 5,900) for the current fiscal year and additional NPR 2 million (USD 16,840) next fiscal year, if they can demonstrate positive changes. Mr. Timilsina wants to promote the area as a 'Lapsi Pocket Zone', as it was done for the Ilam area, Eastern Nepal, known for tea plantations. He argues that "this can be a good opportunity for women's entrepreneurship. It could create income and employment opportunities and ultimately boost our local economic development".

