

FINAL REPORT

on

Assessment of Preliminary Outcomes of Livelihood Interventions on Economics Status of Family and Their Children's Nutrition, Health Care and Education in Saptari, District (CRF/089/2020)

Commissioned by



Save the Children

Kathmandu, Nepal



Conducted by



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Executive Summary

Subsistence farming is the means of household livelihoods for the four fifth of the population living in rural areas in Nepal. Most deprived and vulnerable groups generally live in less endowed and more disaster-prone areas, and thus they are most affected by untoward effect of such stresses. In addition, poor education, skills, access to information and confidence contribute to keeping them hooked in the loop of inter-generational poverty cycle. Save the Children started ME/VT interventions (grocers, vending, tea and snack shops, and other skill-based income generating activities like tailoring, mobile repairing, motorcycle repairing etc) in those communities since 2015 in Saptari district. Farm-based livelihood interventions, basically leasehold vegetable farming, were started intensively since 2016. Some promising results from these interventions are being witnessed in the form of increased income, food security and self-employment among the beneficiaries. Programme activities have been implanting in Bishnupur, Chhinmasata, Khadak, Rajbiraj, Surunga, and Tilathikoiladi Palikas of Saptari. In this context, SC intended to assess the preliminary performance of its livelihood interventions to improve the overall livelihoods of the family and wellbeing of the children.

Under this pretext, SC commissioned the assessment study of Livelihood programme in Saptari district to Centre for Sustainable Development Studies (CSDS) Pvt. Ltd.

A total of 295 beneficiary households were interviewed, of them 139 households adopted on-farm income generation option and 156 adopted ME/VT options. Household production of the beneficiary households increased in comparison to pre-intervention situation. The annual average household income (total household income from different income sources) was found NPR 261284. Analysis of income from different options (excluding income from other sources of household income) was also done to compare the profitability of different income generation interventions extended by the programme. On-farm beneficiaries accrued an average annual income of NRs. 64,340/hh from vegetable sale. While Tea and snacks shop (NRs. 214,115/hh/year), grocery shop (NRs. 140,009/hh/year and motorbike/bicycle repairing workshop (NRs. 92,286/hh/year) were among the most profitable ME/VT options. Household food sufficiency was increased by 3.2 months in comparison to pre-programme situation. Household dietary diversity score was high indicating consumption of sufficient number of different foods/food groups required for healthy diets.

On average, current income of beneficiary households was increased by NRs 134,935, which was 106.8% more compared to the income before the livelihood intervention. Increase in income enabled beneficiaries to access better nutrition, education and health care for the family.

On average, beneficiary families spent NRs 67,572 on child wellbeing, which was 25.9% of their annual household income. Of which, roughly 30-40% was spent on food and nutrition, 25-35% on child education and 25-45% on family health.

Most (82.7%) of the beneficiaries of the livelihood programme were women. With the involvement in programme activity, they enhanced their capacity, earning and control over financial resources. As a result, they are now more visible in the society, their presence is felt, and they are respected by the society. Their role is increasing in family decisions and they are increasingly involved in community discussion and decisions.

Anaemia, stunting, wasting, Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) were the major nutritional issue, while diarrhoea and dysentery are the common waterborne health issues among beneficiary families. Occurrence, severity as well as fatality of these nutritional health

issues are decreasing. Increase in farm production and household income enabled beneficiaries to access better nutrition and health care for the family. Training on nutrient and hygiene management increased awareness on nutrition and health issues.

School enrolment of the children from beneficiary community has increased (75% enrolment at present compare to 25% before). The drop out among the enrolled students is also decreasing (2-3% at present compared to 10% before the programme intervention), but still 2-3% dropout was reported. The drop out children were mainly from the ultra-poor and marginalised family (Mushar, Dom, Chamar, Mandal, Sardar, Madhesi etc.), where children are required to work (look for the animal or look after the younger siblings) to let the parents to work and earn.

Following suggestions are to be considered to achieve programme objective and enhance impact of the activities.

- **Programme support vs impact:** Lack of land (for on-farm beneficiaries) and financial resources (for ME/VT beneficiaries) appeared to be major bottle neck for beneficiaries to expand their enterprise. This needs to be considered while planning project intervention as the programme is working with ultra-poor families. Most-deprived (ultra-poor) households have poor assets, investment capacity, buffering capacity to wait production from their investment, and risk bearing capacity. They work for next meal and need quick return from their investment. Thus, they lack capacity to adopt income generating option requiring capital or monetary investment even if the option is economically lucrative. Therefore, the income generating options extended to such ultra-poor beneficiaries should include the resources needed to adopt the intervention. In this context it suggested to review whether the NRs. 10,000 equivalent business start-up support for ME/VT and rental support for 2.5 *Katthas* (833 m²) of land for vegetable production are sufficient to augment the intended impact on the livelihoods of beneficiaries. In addition, it is suggested to strategize the programme interventions underpinned by the Graduation model poverty alleviation to enable the ultra-poor households to advance towards securing sustainable livelihoods targets.
- **Livelihood options:** Among ME options. income from tea & snacks shop and grocery shop was higher and therefore recommended for scaling up. Despite the low income from mobile vending of vegetable/fish and vegetable production, the options were particularly suitable for ultra-poor families due to low investment required for adoption. There is good potential of increasing incomes from the vegetable farming if the scale of production is increased (as the current average income of NPR 64340/hh/year is from the sale of vegetable produced in small land area (833 m²).
- **Intervention selection:** Increased number of micro-enterprises of similar nature was mentioned as the reason for low income because of undue competition between enterprises. Rapid market assessment is suggested to update the market study conducted in 2018 and understand current situation of the viability of ME/VT options as well as carrying capacity of the market domain.
- **Marketing:** The current production and marketing arrangement may need re-visiting if vegetable production scaled up and quantity produced increased. Establishing local market, collection centre, strengthen business link to wholesalers/ bigger market and different mode for the transport may be some options to consider.
- **Child health and nutrition:** There was reduction in number of cases of child malnutrition as well severity of water borne diseases in recent years. Increase in household food production and income has increased availability as well as access to nutritious diets. Similarly, the training and awareness on child nutrition contributed towards utilisation of available food. However, the problems still exist. Poverty as well poor access to safe water contributing to these problems. Any effort to enhance household capacity to access nutritious diets and clean drinking water would help in reducing the problem associate with child health and under-nutrition.
- **Child education:** School enrolment increased, and dropouts among children of beneficiary families decreased in comparison to the pre intervention situation. All children are admitted to school but not all continue attending. Thus, some dropouts still exist, and children are still out of

school. Use of children for housework support and negligence of parents were the reason for dropout. Support to enhance awareness of parents about the importance child education coupled with interventions to enhance their economic capacity to access education is suggested to eliminate child dropouts.

- **Gender parity among children:** Participants in the discussion vowed of equal treatment to girls and boys. However, despite all children sent to school, boys are favoured for better education in private while girls sent to public schools. This reveals that societal treatment is not equal considering the quality of support provided to girls and boys. This warrants more work to eliminate the gender-based disparity through gender sensitisation workshops and programs.
- **Programme harmonisation with local government:** Elected representatives of local government have suggested the programme to inform them before planning and implementing interventions. Therefore, it is suggested to communicate, consult and coordinate with local government while planning any future interventions so that cooperation from local government is garnered and resource duplication between GO and NGO programme is avoided.
- **Scale of operation vs scaling up:** Though the programme area is known for large ultra-poor population, the livelihood programme reached nearly 500 beneficiaries only. The successful interventions need to be scaled-up in larger scale so that significant proportion of the targeted ultra-poor population take advantage of programme interventions. It is suggested to prepare strategy and programme for scaling up of programme interventions.
- **Data collection approach for income tracking:** The respondents were able to analyse advantage/disadvantages of activities introduced by the programme and articulate their perceptions on the effects of the responses on household production, income and livelihood. However, they struggled to quantify income from different sources as well as different areas of their expenditure. This is attributed to their poor academic background. In addition, they are not habituated in saving and record keeping of their financial situations. In such situation, it is difficult to collect realistic data on quantitative figures using the existing participatory data collection methods, such as FGD and KII. Therefore, it suggested to use alternative approach for collecting segregated data of quantitative nature. At present, implementing partner staff is keeping record in a regular interval. This activity needs to be continued providing technical oversight from appropriate authority for ensuring quality of information collected.