



# **Review Report**

## **“Organising for sustainable agricultural practices” (OSAP) Nepal**

**4 November 2017**

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## Executive summary

### Implementation progress

The project design depicts a strategy comprising group formation and organic farming technical training and learning as a first phase; and the establishment of a cooperative with agreements with owners of hotels and restaurants in a partly overlapping second phase within the current project duration. The project aims at stimulating and developing both the demand and the supply side and, in parallel, to pursue contacts and linkages with likeminded projects and organisations. Progress related to first phase targets has been excellent, while second phase activities are in their initial stages.

The project coverage has been extended from 4 to 9 villages and, hence, from 4 to 9 farmers' groups, cf. annex 2. All groups are established with democratic rules, regulations and structures, and they have all been registered with the District authorities. This means a direct reach and involvement of around 225 farmers, i.e. by far in excess of the original target of 100 farmers.

While the original 4 groups all have a "lead farmer", who acts as the key link between the project and the group and also plays a key role in the farmers' field school training approach, this remains to be established in the additional 5 groups. 7 of the 9 groups are now members of an already existing cooperative, Saramsil Saving and Credit Cooperative.

Saving and credit schemes exist in all groups and are key elements in trust and solidarity building. The schemes also facilitate low interest loans and crop insurance through the cooperative, and access to District agricultural extension services, including discounted farm inputs.

Around 75% of the group members are female, which provides good opportunities to pursue women's empowerment issues beyond the current inclusion and involvement in group management and development.

Farmers' technical skills have improved considerably, but systematic farmers' self-assessments have not been made. Approaches to skills development include farmers' field school and visits to other organic farms. Many farmers feel confident enough to teach other farmers, who are not part of the project..

The production of vegetables used to be for home consumption, and only for part of the year. Now more varieties are grown also in the traditional off-season and a large part of the production is for sale in the local markets. Farmers are well aware of the damaging impacts of using chemicals on the fields, and health problems (headaches) due to use of unprotected chemicals were common. According to the farmers, this is countered by the new methods, and in addition the products get better taste, and the quality of the soil is improved. This, and new knowledge on pricing and marketing has encouraged many farmers to put more time and energy into farming, resulting in increased incomes evidenced through records of production and sales. Still, a systematic survey is required to determine the actual economic gains, weighing the successes and benefits against the risks and failures.

Currently, farmers sell most of the production in the neighbourhood of the farms, which has the advantage of avoiding difficult and costly transport to Nagarkot, the centre with hotels, restaurants and market. A combination of local outlets with a larger scale supply to the centre has a great potential but requires a credible balance between supply and demand.

Representatives from Nagarkot hotels and restaurants have expressed great interest in the project and are committed to enter into such agreements with the cooperative. Efforts must now be given top priority to strengthen the cooperative and to equip it with the capacity to take necessary initiatives in cooperation with the group of large buyers. As a first step a pilot arrangement with 2-3 hotels and restaurants could be entered into.

### **ASK capacity development**

Technical skills training has been conducted for ASK management and staff, both on organic farming issues as well as project management themes.

Monitoring and reporting has been improved and is now satisfactory in terms of form and content, if not timing. The reports to the Project Steering Committee have often been submitted very late.

A communication strategy including an advocacy plan has been developed and applied vis-à-vis some of the key institutional stakeholders. Information on the project has been disseminated via Facebook and in the ASK magazine “Aandhiko SuSheli”.

All in all, the capacity development initiatives have been relevant and in accordance with the key issues listed in the capacity development matrix. It would be useful to prepare a plan on further capacity development activities for the remaining project duration, not least because of imminent changes in the ASK management.

### **Issues for consideration and action**

In the further development of the project it is suggested to consider the following issues for action:

- To introduce the “lead farmer” system in all participating farmers’ groups.
- To complement technical training with rights based governance issues in support of women’s empowerment.
- To analyse and document farmers’ technical skills development
- To comprehensively analyse and document farmers’ economic gains (or losses) as a result of applying organic farming methods.
- To organize weekly organic farming product markets in Nagarkot
- To agree on a pilot agreement with 2-3 hotels and restaurants on a steady and varied supply of organic farming products.
- To develop and implement a capacity development plan for the Saramsil Cooperative.
- To develop appropriate information materials on the process required to refine the organic farming products gradually and over time.
- To ensure timely progress reporting to the Project Steering Committee

- To update the ASK capacity development plan and take the imminent management changes into consideration.

## 1. INTRODUCTION



(The Himalayan Times, 11 October 2017, page 17)

### 1.1 Background

Funded by CISU and initiated in October 2015 OSAP is a joint 3-year project between the Danish NGO Trianglen and the Nepalese NGO ASK. The development objective is: *Eco-coop and sustainable agriculture groups in 4 villages in Baluwapati Deupur VDC, Naldum, Kavre District practice and advocate for climate resilient ecological and sustainable agricultural methods in networks with likeminded organisations in Nepal.*

The project design depicts a strategy comprising group formation and organic farming technical training and learning as a first phase; and the establishment of a cooperative with agreements with owners of hotels and restaurants in a partly overlapping second phase. Thus, primary stakeholders are farmers in the project area (the supply side) as well as hotel and restaurant owners (the demand side). The project implicitly aims at stimulating and developing both the demand and the supply side. In parallel, contacts and linkages with likeminded projects and organisations would be pursued in order to promote sustainable agriculture concepts and approaches in a wider scale.

The Project Document stipulates that internal reviews shall be undertaken by the Project Steering Committee at the biannual PSC meetings, complemented by a partly external review focussing on progress, achievements, lessons learnt, and perspectives for a continuation of the project beyond October 2018. This review was conducted in October 2017.

The Review Team, comprising Rabin Bogati (National Consultant) and Peter Marinus Jensen (International Consultant), wish to thank all parties consulted during the review. This report presents the Review Team's assessments and conclusions, which are not necessarily shared by the parties consulted.

## 1.2 Review methodology

The M&E Framework appended to the Project Document as annex 4 provides the overall foundation for the review, while the Capacity Development Monitoring Framework (PD annex 8) guided the assessment of ASK's capacity to implement the project. Hence, main issues include;

- Examine whether key structures and systems in the project have been established
- Assess whether the agricultural groups are workable and functioning
- Identify issues related to gender and/or social structures affecting the project positively or negatively
- Assess group members' technical skills development
- Examine farmers' economic gains or losses due to their involvement in the project
- Assess farmers' satisfaction with the project
- Document scope of agreements with buyers (hotels, restaurants)
- Assess buyers' satisfaction with the products
- Review advocacy initiatives in terms of scope and relevance
- Review monitoring and reporting standards (quantity and quality)
- Review relevance and effect of internal ASK training arrangements

These issues were included in a "Data collection framework", which guided ASK staff to compile initial information, subsequently tested and complemented by the Review Team.

Monitoring reports and other project documents were perused by the Review Team; and semi-structured interviews and consultations were held with a variety of stakeholders, including farmers, hotel and restaurant owners, tourism officers, district officials, Project Steering Committee members, ASK management and staff, and Trianglen management. The Review Team also benefitted from attending and internal, overall ASK programme review, including the OSAP. In addition, a minor field visit was undertaken.

Preliminary findings and conclusions were finally presented to and discussed with the Project Steering Committee.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

### 2.1 Overall progress

An assessment of the overall progress must, of course, take into consideration that the project has only been in operation for two years. As presented in the Project Document, group formation and training of farmers in organic farming methods and skills were foreseen to be at the centre in a first phase with an overlapping second phase where efforts would be targeting actual sale of organic farming products to hotels and restaurants, based on current (long term) agreements and facilitated by an established cooperative. With this in mind, it is the overall assessment that progress related to first phase targets has been excellent, while second phase activities and achievements are in their initial stages with little results as yet.



**Municipality supports farmers groups** District advisory committee team visited (23 August 2017) four villages for monitoring of organic vegetable farming. The team members included representatives from district offices of agriculture, livestock, and district development committee, representatives of Hotel and tourism institution, and local elected body. There are water sources but farmers have not been used for irrigation, so the farmers requested for support to install pipes irrigation system. The Mayor of Mandan Deupur Municipality Top Bahadur Yauha and Ward no 1 Chair Laxman Bastakoti were also in the visit team and expressed willingness to provide support. Following the request the Municipality has approved Rs 150,000 to provide to the farmers group.

The project coverage has been extended from 4 to 9 villages and, hence, 9 farmers' groups have been formed in contrast to the originally planned 4 groups. Although 'village group' is not a new concept, the 9 groups are innovative in focussing on organic farming and they have generally been formed from scratch through the project. All groups are established with democratic rules, regulations and structures, and they have all been register with the District authorities. This means a direct reach and involvement of around 225 farmers, i.e. by far in excess of the original target of 100 farmers. While the original 4 groups all have a "lead farmer", who acts as the key link between the project and the group and also plays a key role in the farmers' field school training approach, this remains to be established in the additional 5 groups. The intention to establish a new cooperative was abandoned and 7 of the 9 groups are now members of an already existing cooperative, Saramsil Saving and Credit Cooperative. Please refer to the overview in annex 2.

The expansion has obviously been taxing and it would seem that the original 4 groups have been paid more attention than the additional farmers, who to some extent must rely on their own initiatives. It would seem an obvious next priority to introduce the lead farmer system in these groups.

*Yem Bahadur Gurung, 51 years old, is the leader farmer of Laigurans Krishak Samuha/farmers' group. He lives with his wife, and they have 2 children, both studying in University. The children's education is now easy for him to afford, but before he had trouble creating surplus and having enough money to pay for the education. He put a lot of effort into his farming, but he got small output from it for more reasons. One is that his field is on a slope, making it difficult for him to manage. Another is that before he was only producing a few types of vegetables, like spinach and radish, and it only provided vegetables for 3 months of the year.*

*He joined the farmers' group, as it was established by ASK. By increasing the varieties of vegetables he is growing, he has managed to create a great surplus on his 3.5 ropani field. The 3 ropani are used for commercial farming, whereas the rest is the kitchen garden, and he now produces 20 different vegetables, and can supply himself and his family year round, as well as give vegetables to relatives who come for visits. He earns 5-6000 NRS/ month on the vegetable farming now, and also started doing agroforestry on a 5 ropani area. He finds that he can earn 4 times more on producing and selling vegetables than he can on growing corn. The agroforestry provides fodder for his livestock, from which he can also earn 5-6000/ month, selling the milk and meat from his 11 goats and 2 buffalos. The agroforestry can also increase the amount of cash crops, and is a long-term investment, that will take some time to generate a higher income.*

*He was chosen as the leader farmer by the group, and has since then made all the changes described here. He feels the transformation, not only for himself, but also for the other farmers in the group.*

Facilitated by Trianglen's core Village Development programme, saving and credit schemes exist in all groups and are key elements in trust and solidarity building. The schemes also facilitate low interest loans and crop insurance through the cooperative, and access to District agricultural extension services, including discounted farm inputs.

According to both farmers and project staff, issues related to gender or social structures have little if any effect on the project, positively or negatively. However, due to traditional patterns in the division of labour - and since many men seek employment away from home, often abroad - around 75% of the group members are female. This situation provides good opportunities to pursue women's empowerment issues beyond the current inclusion and involvement in group management and



development. So far, project activities – e.g. training – have not conflicted with the women's many other duties and tasks.

Issues related to social exclusion have not emerged. There are Dalit members in two farmers' groups while no Dalits live in the other villages.

*Krishna Sundas is a 59-years-old member of the old Halede Krishak Samuha/farmers' group. He is a Dalit, and as many other, he has not grown much vegetables before the Organic Farming project. He grew 4 varieties (spinach, onion, garlic and radishes), only creating outcome for 2-3 months of the year. He used to ask other people to get vegetables, as he only grew cereal crops, and the vegetable fields lay barren.*

*It has been difficult to have income high enough to provide for his family and for education, which is now easier with the extra income from more growth of vegetables. Since he became a member of the farmers' group, he has started cultivating his fields of 2 ropani with cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes and more, as he has been in the trainings and thereby gotten more practical education in farming techniques. He is happy to do farming, and is a role model for Dalits as well as in whole community, as others have been inspired by his success and also now do their own farming, even when they are not members of the farmers' group.*

According to ASK staff, farmers' technical skills have improved considerably, but systematic farmers' self-assessments have not been made. Skills training include subjects such as compost and farmyard manure, organic pesticides, kitchen garden management, agroforestry, and commercial vegetable farming. Subjects also include management of group, business plan preparation, and knowledge about own rights to services. The latter issue is enforced through continuous involvement and cooperation with the district agricultural extension service, facilitating farmers' access to this type of support. Implicitly, this cooperation and involvement has an element of advocacy, promoting the concept of organic farming. Approaches to skills development include farmers' field school (group-wise as well as joint sessions), and visits to other organic farms. Many farmers feel confident enough to teach other farmers, who are not part of the project groups, as the interest in the project grows.

Significant outcomes have already emerged. The production of vegetables used to be for home consumption, and only for part of the year. Now more varieties are grown also in the traditional off-season and a large part of the production is for sale in the local markets. The limited number of varieties – typically lettuce, radish, garlic, onion and pumpkin – has been significantly increased – and now includes cauliflower, carrot, broccoli, spinach, bitter gourd, tomato, cabbage, soy bean, cow pea, green pea, beans, coriander, chili, cucumber, ladies finger, and brinjal. This is an important achievement and a necessity – together with a guaranteed adequate volume - to eventually enter into agreements on a steady and varied supply with hotels and restaurants.

Farmers are well aware of the damaging impacts of using chemicals on the fields, and health problems (headaches) due to use of unprotected chemicals were common. According to the farmers, this is countered by the new methods, and in addition the products get better taste, and the quality of the soil is improved. This, and new knowledge on pricing and marketing has encouraged many farmers to put more time and energy into farming, resulting in increased incomes evidenced through records of production and sales – a practice introduced by the project.

*Chinimaya Tamang, 32 years old, is a member of a newly formed farmer group, Sayapatri Krishak Samuha. She is the housewife of a four-member family, consisting of herself, her husband, a son and a daughter.*

*Before she was part of the farmer group, Chinimaya did not do vegetable farming. She was not well-educated, had no knowledge of farming and looked out for her small children, as her husband was working abroad. Due to lack of knowledge, she was not encouraged to change her situation, but entering the farmers' group, she got practical training and education. She decided to start doing small-scale farming, growing cow beans, beans and cabbage for kitchen garden. As she had success growing these crops, her ambitions grew, and she decided, she wanted to do tomato farming. Applying for and being granted the materials for the plastic tunnel, she is now also experiencing success with the off season farming in her plastic tunnel.*

*After starting farming, she has experienced many changes in her everyday life. As she says: "Before becoming a member of this farmer groups, I had no knowledge about farming, but now I have gained a lot of knowledge about the new farming practices, and I love to do vegetable farming". The training has helped her introduce new techniques in her own farming, and she has established a plastic tunnel for off season tomato farming. The tunnel is of 5 meters width and 12 meters length, and from the tomato farming she is able to produce surplus enough to earn an income to support the family, generating a total income of around 25,000 NRS by selling the 315 kg produced tomatoes. The tomato-season is not over yet, so she will have more produce to sell later in the season.*

*Many farmers experience problems with insect/pest attacks, but being prepared and using organic pesticides and compost manure, Chinimaya had less issues than others. This is a sign that even though she is inexperienced in farming, she is doing well, as if she had done farming like this for many years. The family farm area is around 2 ropani, and on the field, she grows a great variety of other vegetables as well; onion, garlic, cauliflower, lettuce, sponge gourd, bitter gourd, coriander, cow bean, bean, cucumber, chili and cabbage. The sale of the surplus of these vegetables has generated an additional income of 13,000 NRS.*

*Chinimaya's husband has been abroad for work for 8 years, but he has just returned, and seeing the success of the farming that she has achieved, he now wants to stay with her and the family, as the farming means he does not have to work abroad.*

Economic gains are not only related to increased production and sales but also to reduced costs in farming inputs. There are examples of incomes increased by 500% but a systematic survey is required to determine the actual economic gains, weighing the successes and benefits against the risks and failures. This is also closely related to the overall marketing practices and opportunities. Currently, farmers sell most of the production in the neighbourhood of the farms, which has the advantage of avoiding difficult and costly transport to Nagarkot, the centre with hotels, restaurants and market. A combination of local outlets with a larger scale supply to the centre has a great potential but requires a balance between supply and demand. Large buyers, hotels and restaurants, will need insurance of a steady and varied supply agreed with a joint entity, a cooperative, and not with numerous individual farmers. Issues of collection points and transport are, of course, crucial to address.

Representatives from Nagarkot hotels and restaurants have expressed great interest in the project and are committed to enter into such agreements with the cooperative. At present, however, the cooperative does not seem to have the capacity to fill the role in such a partnership. In line with the overall project strategy and design, efforts must now be given top priority to strengthen the cooperative and to equip it with the capacity to take necessary initiatives in cooperation with the group of large buyers. As a first step a pilot arrangement with 2-3 hotels and restaurants could be entered into.

While volume and variety are key issues, it is also of utmost importance to be transparent about organic farming as a process and that the products can only gradually over time become truly organic. Thus, some kind of informative labelling should be developed until such time when certification becomes a realistic option.

## 2.2 ASK capacity development

A simplified capacity development monitoring framework appended to the Project Document relates to the organisational capacities of ASK in general and includes critical functions in project management and implementation.

It is the overall assessment that monitoring and reporting has been improved and is now satisfactory in terms of form and content, if not timing. The monitoring framework has regularly been reviewed and is adhered to. One biannual report is prepared and submitted to the Social Welfare Council and the District Agricultural Development Office, respectively, while biannual indicator based reports and narrative reports are prepared to the Project Steering Committee and, thus, also to Trianglen. However, the reports to the Project Steering Committee have often been submitted very late.

A communication strategy including an advocacy plan has been developed and applied vis-à-vis some of the key institutional stakeholders, including the Baluwapati Deupur Village Development Committee, the District Agricultural Office, and “Organic Certification Nepal”. Information on the project has been disseminated via Facebook and in the ASK magazine “Aandhiko SuSheli”.

Technical skills training has been conducted for ASK management and staff, both on organic farming issues as well as project management themes.

All in all, the capacity development initiatives have been relevant and in accordance with the key issues listed in the capacity development matrix. It would be useful to prepare a plan on further capacity development activities for the remaining project duration, not least because of imminent changes in the ASK management.

## 3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

In the further development of the project it is suggested to consider the following issues for action:

- To introduce the “lead farmer” system in all participating farmers’ groups and thereby strengthen the linkages between the groups and the project as well as facilitating training and learning systems, including the Farmers’ Field School approach.
- To complement technical training with rights based governance issues in support of – particularly – women’s empowerment.
- To analyse and document farmers’ technical skills development based on participatory approaches, i.e. farmers’ self-assessments and priorities in respect of further training and learning activities.
- To comprehensively analyse and document farmers’ economic gains (or losses) as a result of participating in the project and of applying organic farming methods.

- To organize weekly organic farming product markets in Nagarkot and in this connection establish one or more appropriate collection points.
- To agree on a pilot agreement with 2-3 hotels and restaurants on a steady and varied supply of organic farming products. This should be carefully monitored and documented in terms of achievements and possible obstacles with a view to future upscaling.
- To develop a capacity development plan for the Saramsil Cooperative based on its desirable management role in cooperating with large buyers in Nagarkot and in the general development of marketing opportunities.
- To develop appropriate information materials on the project and the process required to refine the organic farming products gradually and over time.
- To ensure that progress reporting is submitted to the Project Steering Committee in accordance between agreement between ASK and Trianglen.
- To update the ASK capacity development plan and take the imminent management changes into consideration.



## Annex 1

### Itinerary

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
23 August 2017	District Coordination Committee field monitoring Interaction with farmers in Sathikuria and Makaibari
18-20 September 2017	Farmers' field visit and interactions with farmers
22-25 September 2017	Focus group discussions
11 October 2017	Review of Trianglen Supported Programme in Kavre Focus Group Discussion with Leader Farmers (4) Interaction with Local Elected body members (3)
12 October 2017	Farmers' field visit and interaction with Cooperative officials
13 October 2017	Consultation with ASK management Consultation with Hotel and Restaurant owners Kavre
14 October 2017	Semi-annual review and Debriefing of review findings in Project Steering Committee Meeting

## **Persons consulted**

- 1) Komal Dhamala, Local Development Officer, District Coordination Committee Kavre
- 2) Top Bahadur, Mayor, Mandan Deupur Municipality, Kavre
- 3) Indra Lama, Chair, Naldung-Nagarkot Tourism Development Committee
- 4) Ms Durga Bade, Chief, Monitoring Unit, DCC, Kavre
- 5) Laxmidutta Banstakoti, Chair ward 1, Mandan Deupur Municipality
- 6) Keshav P Timilsina, Chair ward 2, Mandan Deupur Municipality
- 7) Madhav P. Khatiwada, Secretary Ward 2, Mandan Deupur Municipality
- 8) Dr. Narayan Shrestha, Chief, District Livestock Development Office
- 9) Durga Pandit, Chief, District Agriculture Office
- 10) Yam Prasad Paudel, Agriculture Officer, Department of Agriculture
- 11) Kyaron Dhouju, Secretary of Naldung-Nagarkot Tourism Development Committee and Hotel Owner, Nagarkot
- 12) Dilman Tamang, Chair, Sharmseel Saving and Credit Cooperative, Nagarkot
- 13) Ram Prasad Dhakal, Member Ward Committee, Mandan Deupur Municipality
- 14) Badri Makaju, Hotel Owner and former Chair Naldung-Nagarkot Tourism Development Committee
- 15) Rukum Dutta Sharma, Chair ASK
- 16) Sukharam Tamang, Chair, Prakriti Farmers' Group
- 17) Purna Bahadur Tamang, Leader farmer and Secretary of Coperative
- 18) Nabin Gurung, General Manager, Hotel Bhangeri
- 19) Sadhuram Dhakal, Owner, Pradise Hotel, Nagarkot
- 20) Krishna Katuwal, CEO, Hotel Country Villa, Nagarkot
- 21) Arun Jha, CEO, Club Himalaya, Kagarkot
- 22) Ms Sarita Tamang, Leader Farmer, Makaibari -7
- 23) Ms. Chinimaya Tamang, Leader Farmer, Chhapgoan
- 24) Yam B Gurung, Leader Fermer, Sathikuria
- 25) Krishna Sundas, Dalit Farmer, Haledi

## Annex 2

### List of farmers' groups

S. No	Name of village	Name of farmer groups	No. of farmers			Name of leader farmer and chairperson
			Male	Female	Total	
1	Gairi gaun	Prakriti Krishak Samuha	9	18	27	Purna Bahadur Tamang-LF
2	Chitte gaun	Chitte gaun Krishak Samuha	11	15	26	Neshma Tamang- CR
3	Chhapa gaun	Sayapatri krishak Samuha	2	25	27	Maya Tamang-CR
4	Duba gaun	Mahankal Krishak Samuha	11	15	26	Nirmaya Tamang-CR
5	Halede	Halede Krishak Samuha	18	12	30	Kiran Bastakoti- LF
6	Dhanda gaun	Dhanda gaun Krishak Samuha	8	10	18	Nirmala Tamang-CR
7	Makaibari	Lalupate Krishak Samuha	2	21	23	Sarita Tamang- LF
8	Kafleni	Laganshil Krishak Samuha	8	20	28	Sabina Tamang-CR
9	Sathikuria	Laligurans Krishak Samuha	18	9	27	Yem Bahadur Tamang-LF
Total			87	145	232	

CR – Chairperson, LF – Leader Farmer

### List of training conducted

S.N.	Name of Training	No of events	No of Participants		
			Male	Female	Total
1.	Farm yard manure management	9	94	173	267
2.	Compost manure, liquid manure and organic pesticides preparation	9	90	152	242
3.	Kitchen garden management	9	47	156	203
4.	Soil and seed improvement	1	13	30	43
5.	Organic commercial vegetable farming	4	53	43	96
6.	Establishment and management of agroforestry	2	21	22	43
7.	Cooperative management	1	16	13	29
8.	Business plan Preparation	1	18	10	28