



WOMEN LEADING MECHANIZATION HIRE SERVICES:

An inspiring story from Chiti village, Nepal

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Nepal, a landlocked country known for its mountain peaks including Mount Everest — the world's tallest peak, is home to Chiti village. Chiti village lies in the country's mid-hills at about 180 km from Nepal's capital city, Katmandu. It is home to 60 households of different ethnicities such as Brahmin, Chhetri and Dalit.

Most households of Chiti village rely on agriculture and wage labour for their livelihoods. Rice, maize and wheat are the main staple crops. Farmers from the village would walk for more than two hours several times during the harvest seasons to process their grains at the nearest mill centre. To address this problem, 27 women formed the so-called mother's group in 2015, with a simple yet powerful objective: to establish a mill and provide hire mechanization services to their community.

Chhimeki Bikas Bank, a local microfinance bank, provided the group with a collateral-free loan of USD 3400 with an annual interest rate of 16 percent. This was enough to cover the initial investment for a thresher, a sheller and a huller, their installation, and the materials for constructing a shelter to keep the machines in. All the group members volunteered their time and labour to construct the shelter on a leased property.

At the beginning of their journey, the group faced many challenges to set up their agribusiness. Lack of access to agricultural and machinery training; high work burden due to domestic and farming responsibilities; fear of failure, judgement and criticism; to only name a few. Despite these challenges, the group's mill started to run in November 2015. As a next step, the group hired an



operator with knowledge of how to operate the mill and the machines. Besides, the machines require regular maintenance and occasional repair. Fortunately, the mother's group has access to mechanics and spare parts in proximity.

Two group members are in charge of monitoring the machines' operation and keeping weekly business accounts. "At the beginning, not all women knew how to perform these tasks. Gradually, the members learned how to monitor and keep records with the help of other members and the staff from Chhimeki Bikas Bank" explained Ms Radhika Tiwari, the chairperson and treasurer of the mother's group. "During the peak season in January and February, the mill operates every day. Otherwise, it operates three times a week on a first-come-first-served basis" she added.

Seven years later, the mill is still running and providing mechanization services to the community with an average net annual profit of about USD 1000. The group recovered the initial investment only three years after its creation. "The purpose behind establishing the mill was to provide services to the community rather than for business purposes" explained Ms Tiwari. The group either saves the profit from the mill or uses it for social development activities within the community. As an example, the group donated a portion of the profit to the community's public school.

Throughout the years, the women from the mother's group have not only generated income and developed entrepreneurial skills, but also gained confidence and self-esteem and fostered a sense of belonging in their village. This story of a mother's group from Chiti village is an example of collective action, willingness to innovate and not being afraid of breaking gender stereotypes. Truly inspiring!



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Tips for helping more women create their agribusiness on mechanization

- ❁ Include women in training on operation, maintenance, and repair of farm machinery and business skills.
- ❁ Raise awareness in rural communities on social, economic and gender issues that hamper women to access mechanization.
- ❁ Finance women-led agribusinesses in rural communities. Agribusinesses on mechanization include hire mechanization services for various crops along the value chain and value addition for processing food products.
- ❁ Document and disseminate inspiring stories about successful women leading agribusinesses and mechanization services.
- ❁ Formulate and implement projects and programs that respond to women's needs for mechanization and that support agribusiness opportunities in rural communities.
- ❁ Reduce women's work burden through improved access to technologies, including mechanization and sharing domestic and family care responsibilities more equally between women and men.

For further information and queries

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