

Women working in the fields in Jumla



# Care Responsiveness of Livelihoods Programming: The Enterprise Development Programme, Oxfam Nepal

Programmatic notes for Women's Economic Empowerment Policy and Programming



Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST)

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PROGRAMMATIC NOTES

Oxfam launched the Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) in Nepal in 2011. As a livelihoods programme, it aims to develop capabilities and markets for small rural enterprises, with a specific focus on women. The programme targets those agricultural sub-sectors that create opportunities for women at various levels, including at the levels of production, access to the market and leadership and management. Currently, the programme is being implemented through three enterprises in Nepal: The Small Farmer Food Industries rice mill in Nawalparasi, Pavitra Jankalyan Agriculture Cooperative for vegetable seed production in Surkhet and, and The Dadeldhura Farmers' Cooperative Society (DAFACOS) for selling seeds and vegetables in Dadeldhura. Though EDP was not specifically designed from a 'care' perspective, in the course of its implementation, there have been some efforts to recognise women's drudgery in their paid work as well as the limitations to women's time and energies owing to their care responsibilities. As such, the programme has evolved over time and has come up with timely solutions to address the reduction of women's drudgery, particularly in the performance of their paid work.

## Context of the research

This note examines Oxfam Nepal's EDP programme to understand how women's economic empowerment (WEE) policy and programming can generate a 'double boon' – paid work that empowers women and provides more support for their unpaid care work responsibilities. For this research, we studied the Pavitra Jankalyan Agriculture Cooperative in Surkhet. Based on discussions with the Environmental Development Society (EDS), a local community based organisation who are social partners for the EDP Programme in Surkhet and the Pavitra Cooperative staff and board members, we selected the two research sites of Mehelkuna and Maintada.

The research adopted a mixed-method approach, with primary data consisting of quantitative and qualitative data, which was collected from women from low-income families who were engaged in paid work, and had at least one child under the age of six years, and their families. Besides this, 19 participatory tools designed from a care lens were conducted with the community, and data was also collected through interviews with key informants in the community and the programme.

## What works for a 'double boon'

Since Oxfam's involvement with Pavitra Seed Cooperative started in 2011, the number of women members has grown to 64 per cent of the membership (as on March 2017), and women non-member farmers trading through the Cooperative has also grown by 74 per cent. Further, the representation of women in the board has gone up by 47 per cent (EDP Annual Report 2015-2016, Oxfam 2016). Moreover, the quality of women's engagement has evolved over the process of implementation of the programme, 'there was a time when the women could not even say their names, they would skip the meetings, they were apprehensive about attending it, however, today, they can easily express their thoughts and ideas and attend every programme' (Programme Officer, Maintada, January 2016).

Oxfam in Nepal has also introduced Participatory Learning Centers (PLCs) in all its EDP centres as part of the programme. The PLC discussions have helped programme staff to recognise women's double burdens and time poverty. As a senior member of the programme staff says,

we ask them about their increased workload with the economic opportunities as they have to look after the children and do their household work alongside. We found out that women balance the work more through time management rather than through redistribution.

Kathmandu, June 2016

This has enabled programme staff to come up with solutions such as increased mechanisation to reduce the effects of women's double burdens.

PLC classes have also been instrumental in increased women's representation at the Board as well as women taking control of their resources. As the head of EDS explains:

Only two years ago, there was only one woman in the Committee. Then, we had a discussion in the PLC where the women argued that since there was place for women in lower levels of the organisation such as the groups, why wasn't there a place for them in the higher-level body which was the cooperative itself. As a result of that discussion, they demanded their share in the upper level and currently I suppose there are six women. Before that there was only one female member and that too she was Deputy Chairman, with very less role in decision making.

Mehelkuna, December 2015

The PLC classes have also resulted in women participating in the process of governance. A group leader of one of the farmers' groups in Mehelkuna shares that it was through discussions in the PLC classes that women came to know of the mandatory 10 per cent VDC budgetary allocation for women's development which then enabled women to 'spend it on the sectors that need it like the irrigation or construction of roads or electricity transmission lines' (January 2016).

Oxfam's EDP Programme is sensitive to women's care needs and recognises the double burden on women in the programme as part of linkages to women's economic empowerment, 'since women are the ones more involved in threshing, we try to decrease or balance their workload by providing them helpful equipment'(Programme Officer, Kathmandu, June 2016). Women EDP participants also shared the importance of seed-sorting machines as it both improved productivity and also drastically reduced the time spent on the same work from one month to 2-3 days, thereby decreasing their time poverty substantially. Another direct intervention aimed at reducing care burdens has been the introduction of a bio-gas facility in Ward 5 of Mehelkuna provided by the cooperative, 'this has decreased their workload and improved their health'(Chairman of the Cooperative, Mehelkuna, January 2016).



## What hinders a 'double boon'

Almost all women seed producers spoke of the lack of irrigation facilities in the area as a hindrance to their economic gains as this substantially increased their work burdens as they had to irrigate their farms manually. A farmer's group leader in her analysis of the challenges faced by the EDP participants, points to the combination of factors that could impede the economic gains for the women from the programme,

Women have to do seed production along with household work. The production is not high based on the amount of seed they get [and] their seeds are not always of good quality. While growing the seeds, they might face scarcity of irrigation and manure-because of [which] their seeds may not be healthy and big in size, some seed plants may also get rotten. All these factors may not earn them as much income as they expect.

Leader, Farmers' group, Maintada, January 2016

Furthermore, as the source of drinking water and water for irrigation was the same, community members had to take turns to irrigate their farms which hurt their income. Women also spoke about the difficulty of carrying



Women Carrying firewood in Surkhet

sacks of grains on their heads, 'we have to carry it [the seeds] as public transport charges are high.' (Mankumari Oli, Mehelkuna, February 2016). In Maintada, a community leader shared that efforts were made to build a seed collection centre in Maintada with help of Oxfam Nepal and two of the local cooperatives including Pavitra Seed Cooperative. However, this failed due to staff inefficiency so the women have gone back to carrying their produce to the market. However, a new seed collection and processing unit has been set up in Mehelkuna by Pavitra Seed Cooperative in July 2016; even so, it would still be difficult for women from remote villages to reach this one collection centre in one VDC given the distance and reach of the programme in different VDCs.

The PLC classes have been beneficial for some women who are programme participants as it is often tied to their agricultural training classes. However, non-programme participants were not that interested in PLCs, even though they were encouraged to participate. This could be because the discussions were often tied to EDP meetings which non-participant women did not find engaging. While some women EDP participants found trainings and discussions interesting to attend, they too did not have time to attend these meetings owing to their unpaid care responsibilities.

## What could be done to engender a ‘double boon’?

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- There is a basic recognition amongst the EDP and cooperative staff regarding women’s double burden and the accompanying drudgery and time poverty that women face. However, there is a lack of ability to articulate the linkages between women’s paid and care work. There’s a need for building capacities of the EDP, EDS and the Cooperative staff members on the discourses of care and how these affect women’s participation and productivity in paid work and vice-versa.
- ‘Rapid Care Analysis (RCA) can be critical for uncovering less-understood barriers to women’s and girls’ participation in our programmes, and barriers to their ability to benefit equitably from our programmes.’(Kidder and Pionetti 2013:3). As such it is important to conduct RCA in the current and future enterprises that EDP plans to develop. This tool will help build understanding amongst the staff and the community about the linkages between unpaid care work and paid work. Specifically, it would help build women’s capacities as producers, address challenges for women in participating in the EDP programme and/or in expansion of their current enterprise, and enable the building of community assets and public services.
- Introduction of time and energy-saving devices (seed-sorting machines, threshers, etc.) have been a boon for the women reducing both their drudgery and time poverty. More of these devices would be beneficial for women. A study to evaluate the extent to which energy and time-saving devices in seed production have helped women in increasing their productivity and wellbeing would be beneficial. Women’s ownership of technology would further help in EDP’s aim of state recognition of women as primary agricultural producers.
- Participatory Learning Centers are crucial instruments in the EDP programme as they include the entire community and envision women’s leadership in communities. At present, PLCs form a small part of the programme usually conducted in the initial phase when the programme is being included in the community/cooperative. EDP’s financial support is very small to encourage the community’s ownership of the PLCs. However, for the sustainability of the PLC within the community, EDP can explore the need for collaboration with existing government infrastructure and budget allocations such as the 10 per cent grant allocation or women’s development in the VDC budget allocations.
- Seed collection centres/grain banks can be built as community assets by involving the local government bodies at appropriate distances which will relieve women and children from carrying heavy loads on their heads and backs. EDP can initiate discussions between the community leaders and state representatives for pushing these collection centres, as it is vital for lessening women’s drudgery and work burdens.
- Women’s economic empowerment as envisioned by the EDP programme will remain incomplete unless the programme intersects with public infrastructure and goods such as irrigation, roads, childcare centres, health services, etc. This will help women producers carry out care work responsibilities through their life cycles without burdening other women and girl children in the family. The Programme can engage with concerned government agencies and other INGO programmes operating in the area regarding existing public services and to initiate new services (for example childcare centres, more water taps, irrigation channels, etc.) based on community needs, in order to strengthen these services and maximise outreach.

## References

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- Kidder, T., and C. Pionetti (2013) Participatory Methodology: Rapid Care Analysis - Guidance for Managers and Facilitators, Oxford: Oxfam
- Oxfam (2016) Oxfam's Enterprise: Development Programme in Nepal. Annual Report 2015/16, Enterprise Development Programme (EDP), Nepal: Oxfam

## Credits

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- **Authors:** Anweshaa Ghosh and Anjam Singh with input from Shraddha Chigateri
- **Photos:** Women Carrying firewood in Surkhet – Anweshaa Ghosh  
Women working in the fields in Jumla – Soraj Shahi  
Best Price Shop in Mehelkuna – Anweshaa Ghosh

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## Programmatic notes for Women's Economic Empowerment Policy and Programming

Balancing unpaid care work and paid work carried out qualitative and quantitative research in India, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania across 16 sites. This research explores how women's economic empowerment policies and programmes can take unpaid care work into account, in order to enable economic empowerment to be optimised, shared across families and sustained across generations. It focusses on the social

organisation of care in low income households, and at the role of families, state, private sector and not-for profit sector.

Ultimately it aims to identify measures that can lead towards a 'double boon', creating paid work that empowers women and provides core support for their unpaid care work responsibilities.

The Balancing unpaid care work and paid work project explores the successes, challenges and lessons for Women's Economic Empowerment programmes and policies.



### NEPAL

Research was undertaken in 2016 in four sites in the Surkhet and Jumla regions of Nepal

- 📍 Mehlkuna
- 📍 Chandannath
- 📍 Maintada
- 📍 Depalgaon

### PROJECT LEAD:



Institute of Development Studies

### RESEARCH PARTNERS:



Institute of Studies Sciences

### UPTAKE PARTNER:



Oxfam Nepal

For more project background information, publications and access to datasets and case studies, visit [interactions.ids.ac.uk/wee](https://interactions.ids.ac.uk/wee)

Balancing unpaid care work and paid work is part of the global Growth and Equal Opportunities for Women programme (GrOW) [bit.ly/1PbKwAd](https://bit.ly/1PbKwAd)



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