

Feminisation of Local Communities and its Impact on Food Security in Rural Nepal

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Sujata Tamang, PhD

University of New South Wales

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the feminisation of local communities and its impact on food security in rural Nepal. The boosted labour market in Gulf countries has contributed to the absence of men, thereby shifting responsibilities to women within households, communities and state affairs in rural areas of Nepal. The feminisation of local communities has an impact on all dimensions of rural life, including livelihoods but in particular on food security.

The feminisation of local communities is a relatively new phenomenon and its relationship to food security is understudied. The literature on food security has given little attention to the feminisation of local communities in Nepal. This thesis aims to address this gap by focusing on the relationship between the feminisation of local communities and food security. Drawing on research conducted in rural Nepal, this thesis highlights a number of issues related to the feminisation of local communities, including the use of land, access to and control over resources, and women's participation in decision-making at the household, community and state levels. However, despite these changes, historically-rooted patriarchal practices and hierarchical relations among different social groups are reinforcing the status quo, thereby reducing food security of local communities.

This thesis employs a feminist political ecology perspective to critically analyse the relationship between the feminisation of local communities and food security. The study used a mixed methods approach and case study strategy to collect data from two case study sites: Nalma of Lamjung and Piprahar of Nawalparasi districts, both located in Western Nepal. Methods included household surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, document review and participant observations.

The thesis demonstrates the differentiated impacts of the feminisation of local communities on food security among different social and economic groups, highlighting the strategies employed by different social groups to manage their livelihoods and everyday lives. Such differentiated impacts on food security are linked to the persistence of discriminatory practices based on gender, caste, ethnicity, and wealth. The thesis suggests that a broader political response on the issues of feminisation and food security is needed. This is possible when a trans-formative approach to land use, access to and control over resources and participation

in decision-making is adopted. A prerequisite of such policy departure would be the development of capacities of women and the poor and marginalised groups, with the focus on food security.

About the Speaker:

Sujata Tamang is a recent PhD graduate from the School of Social Science, University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney, Australia. She holds Masters degrees from UNSW (2012) and Tribhuvan University (2011). Her current research is in the areas of feminsation of local communities linking with rural livelihoods and food security. She has been involved with ForestAction Nepal on research and policy analysis as well and capacity building activities within Agriculture theme. Her areas of interests include; participatory action research, gender and social inclusion, rural livelihoods, women in agriculture, development and planning and Indigenous knowledge.