Professionals in their field: Women vegetable farmers in Nepal

By

Ashley L. Honsberger

A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
in
Capacity Development and Extension,
International Development Studies

Guelph, Ontario
© Ashley L. Honsberger, May, 2015
ABSTRACT

PROFESSIONALS IN THEIR FIELD: WOMEN VEGETABLE FARMERS IN NEPAL

Ashley L. Honsberger
University of Guelph, 2015

Advisor: Glen Filson

As such, this thesis uses descriptive analysis to determine the level of agency that women experience from market-oriented vegetable farming. The research methods include participant observation, farmer interviews, key informant interviews and critical discourse analysis. Using a force field framework of enabling and disenabling factors to analyze the findings, the analysis investigates actors in the local value chain and their influence on the livelihoods of women smallholders. The findings suggest that women have the same potential to become entrepreneurs as men, and they strive to become Professional Farmers. The methodology for change is through sustained, quality training that allows women to subvert gender roles by assuming the identity of a Professional Farmer. While women and men also find success through working in harmony, women need to push back against the patriarchal norms that systemically oppress them. In this way, women's own notions of empowerment become part of the development process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document recognizes that not only does it take a village to raise a child, but it takes a community to support a Masters student. I offer sincere thanks to my advisor Glen Filson whose guidance, motivation, and support throughout the process of this thesis helped me grow as a student and researcher. Next I thank my committee members Helen Hambly-Odame and Laxmi Pant for their support and contributions to my personal learning as well as to this humble piece of research. I have benefited greatly from their experiences as well as through the guidance they openly shared along the way. I also thank my fellow Capacity Development colleagues for helping me feel part of a supportive community of learners.

This research was made possible by the kindness of strangers, whose willingness in welcoming a wayward Canadian into their midst made this research possible. Specifically I thank my friends Anamika Aryal, Jeny Paudyal, and Ezina KC who were my cultural guides throughout the research process, as well as my classmates Rajan Chhatkuli and Davan Raja for being generous with their time and personal contacts. Next I thank my very supportive husband Nathan Klages for helping me to follow my passions, and for coming along for the ride. Life is so much easier when you have a partner in crime to share it with.

Lastly I wish to acknowledge that this research would not be possible without the openness of the Nepalese farmers I encountered through this study and the people that work in supporting roles to help them improve their livelihoods.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract iii  
Acknowledgements iv  
Table of contents v  
Index of tables

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Agricultural development and gender in Nepal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Definition of key terms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>The importance of vegetables and women farmers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Research problem</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Study rationale</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Poverty in Nepal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>The status of women in Nepal</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3</td>
<td>Food nutrition and security</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Women’s engagement in commercialized value chains</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>Vegetable subsector and stakeholder analysis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>Smallholders and vegetable value chain engagement</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3</td>
<td>Gendered stakeholder analysis</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Agriculture and gender in Nepal</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Conceptual framework</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 3: Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Epistemology: A critical feminist perspective</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>The researcher</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Origins of the research</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Site selection, research assistances and logistics</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>Migrant labor</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2</td>
<td>Regional pricing</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3</td>
<td>Urban-rural interface</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Data sources and collection methods</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
<td>Participant sampling</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
<td>Interview translation process</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# 3.6.1 Assumptions

# 3.6.2 Study limitations

# Summary

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 He said, she said: Agriculture and representation in popular</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>news media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Atmosphere and government</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Variance in vegetable markets</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Respondent characteristics</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Respondent location and group affiliation</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Household features</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Off-farm employment or income</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Motivations for doing training</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1 Changes experienced from training</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2 Social change</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Empowerment according to the respondents</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Constraints to commercialization</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1 Land and labor as limits to expansion</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Farm business tasks by gender</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Strategies for higher prices</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8.1 Dealing with middlemen</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8.2 Characteristics of being an entrepreneur</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8.3 Farming as the only option for women</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Summary</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.0 Introduction</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Sustained barriers for women farmers</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Divergent views of empowerment</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Upending gender conventions</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Towards a capitalistic agricultural sector</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Professional Farmers as agents for change</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Summary</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 6: FINAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Final summary</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Conclusions</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1 Objective 1: Knowledge and experience skillset of market-</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oriented farmers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.2 Objective 2: The extent to which market-oriented farming contributes to empowerment

6.2 Recommendations for future research

6.3 Suggestions for turning research into better practice

6.3.1 Support of community leadership

6.3.2 Professional Farmer Certificate Program

6.3.3 Knowledge hubs

6.3.4 Support of collective action

6.3.5 Summary of recommendations

6.5 Concluding thoughts

CHAPTER 7: REFERENCES & APPENDICES

7.1 References

7.2 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Key informant question bank

Appendix B: Vegetable farmer questionnaire
## Index of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.1 Land ownership by country for smallholder farmers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2 Women’s Cooperative Society 12 Promises</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3 Characteristics of being an entrepreneur</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Index of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1 Population growth in Nepal by District</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2 Vegetable value chain map in Nepal</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.3 Conceptual framework</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1 Development Regions of Nepal</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1 World cloud of word frequency in news articles</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2 Head of household</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3 Main change experienced from training</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4 Land mass size of participants versus census data</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4.1 Tasks complete by sex - All areas</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4.2 Women executing task by region</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4.3 Aggregate of both men and women executing task by region</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4.4 Men executing task by region</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.5 Who takes the goods to market</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1 Original Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.2 Revised Theoretical Framework based on Findings</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Agricultural development and gender in Nepal

Some may argue that connecting smallholder farmers to the global commodity value chain can make them further vulnerable to markets. This is pertinent to the particular moment in development in Nepal, given that attention by the development community has focused on the role of smallholder farmers in the facet of commercialization, entrepreneurship and ultimately increased economic activity in the local and global agricultural markets. This is particularly true in Nepal, where upwards of 70 per cent of eligible labor is engaged in the sector and of those, 90.5 per cent are women and 74.9 per cent are men, the large share of which is in a smallholder capacity (FAO, ND; Government of Nepal, 2011; Samriddhi Prosperity Foundation, 2011). Due to a male hiring bias in urban areas, as well as significant male migration to other countries for labour opportunities, the proportion of women living and working in rural areas in Nepal, particularly in agriculture, is increasingly larger than men (FAO, 2012). As evidenced by the sheer number of women engaged in agriculture it is clear that they have a large role to play in its development, however as evidenced in the Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, women’s “access to resources and opportunities to enable them to move from subsistence agriculture to higher value chains is much lower than men’s” (WB & IFAD, 2009: 173). Furthermore, the third Millennium Development Goal identifies women’s empowerment as not only an end in itself, but a means to
contribute to increased efficiencies and improved productivity in the agricultural sector (IFPRI, 2012).

Culturally, Nepal has a deeply entrenched system of patriarchy, “the structured ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity” (Enloe, 2004:4). This contributes to Nepal ranking alarmingly low at 157 of 208 on the UN Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2012). Women in Nepal can expect a lower life expectancy than men, are 35 per cent less literate, have a smaller share of household resources and their productive economic activity has to date, been largely unaccounted for and as such, significant challenges to the growth of the agricultural sector in the context of this gender disparity exist (USAID, 2011; Worec Nepal 2013; WB, 2013).

Many farmers in Nepal are primed for taking advantage of agricultural exports and value added products due in part to their agriculturally based assets: productive land that can grow a wide variety of crops, and a large and active labour force (World Bank 2013). However there is general consensus that a key challenge to serving domestic and international demand is the commercialization of its markets and in turn, its farm operations (World Bank, 2013; Samriddhi Prosperity Foundation, 2011; CIA World Fact Book, ND). A paper by the Samriddhi Prosperity Foundation on commercialization of agriculture in Nepal states that “the proportion of holdings that produce mainly for sale is not even 1 per cent, while little over 21 per cent farm families use their farm produce almost equally for both sale and home consumption” (Samriddhi Prosperity Foundation, 2011:3). While this statistic may show the 1 per cent of commercialized farmer as being a section of the demographic
on the fringe, the reality is that an increasing number of women are in charge of farming, and thus within the 21 per cent of farmers currently selling and consuming their product, an opportunity exists for women farmers to further their commercial efforts. On this topic, the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook* states “it is crucial that current debates about agricultural and value chain finance, remittance transfers, and commercialization incorporate gender equity in their strategies for economic growth and poverty reduction” (WB & IFAD, 2009:91). Further, in a 2009 paper by The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, they argue that “the social and gender dimension of value chain development is still rarely acknowledged or addressed” (ICIMOD, 2009). The question that remains is, to what end? Is a woman farmer involved in her own commercially focused enterprise receiving social, political or economic benefits beyond simply having her own income?

1.2 Definition of key terms

The terms ‘empowerment’ and ‘gender equality’ versus ‘gender equity’ have contested definitions or “conceptual ambiguity” (Lee & Koh, 2001), and so attempts were made to create a suitable working definition based on the context offered by participants. In the context of Nepal and its farming community, empowerment means the ability to work equally with their partner to make decisions, and benefit from the income generated from the farm. This study is concerned with gender equity as a process that redistributes power and access to resources, which results in women to gaining “equivalence in life outcomes” (Reeves & Baden, 2000). Access
means freedom to use resources whereas control indicates one has the power to
decide how and whether or not to use a resource (Adhikary, 2010). Empowered
individuals have the right to free movement, association and decisions over their
own body. Empowerment in this context assumes that gender relations subordinate
women and exclude them from institutions thus eliminating their ability to effect
the transformational change necessary that leads to empowerment (Reeves &
Baden, 2000). Furthermore empowerment is not an end state, it is a relationship
between having the ability to make strategic life choices, and those factors
“contingent on a prior or future state” (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015:405). To that end,
Professional Farming was an emergent term not discovered in the literature review.
In this study, it means farmers who use modern methods of farming such as
integrated pest management, proper pesticide use, row planting, seedling
propagation, some level of planning and record keeping, marketing (collective or
otherwise), and as one farmer described it, a process of farming with intention.
Professional Farming will be addressed in the Discussion portion of this thesis and
will be employed as the operative means through which women begin to reclaim
some of the power lacking in their lives.

1.3 The importance of vegetables and women farmers

A major initiative currently being run by The International Fund for
Agricultural Development (IFAD) identifies vegetables as high value crops with low
domestic production, despite a great-unmet domestic demand and as well, as a good
opportunity for women (IFAD, 2015). The list of groups involved in women and
vegetable farming in Nepal is long but includes international NGOs such as Heifer International, USAID, Helvetas and JICA, and NGOs local to Nepal such as LI-BIRD and Rangjung Yeshe Shenpen (Shenpen). In particular many projects have focused on irrigation or other technologies to enable expansion into vegetable crops for the offset benefits of better household nutrition and a wider variety of income sources (Chhetri & Bhurtel, 2006) and many focus on training for particular skills that lead to better production. Each project reviewed in the list above understandably takes on a varied approach, but none appear to include the language of commercialization nor do they imbue the skills required for smallholder commercialization. In a 2005 article by Chaitanya Mishra, he states

The macro and the long run remain highly underemphasized both in the syllabi and the research agenda. The sociology of the interconnectedness of the global, the national and the local, the dynamics of this interconnection and the implications this interconnectedness has on the present and future lives of different social categories. (2005: 101).

In this instance he is supporting a broader argument related to western influence on development in Nepal, however this idea applies nicely to the macroeconomic outlook of Nepalese agriculture and the role smallholder and specifically vegetable farming could play if developed in an inclusive manner. This is the primary reason this research is warranted, as there remains a gap in training that would lead to commercialization for women for commercial facing enterprises, but furthermore, in the instances where they have achieved that training and some success, mainly in peri-urban areas, understanding is low as to whether they are receiving any benefits from participating in commercial or market oriented enterprises.
As such it is imperative that further critical research is conducted to determine differences in the gendered experience in commercialized vegetable operations, by paying particular attention to learning from those women farmers who have been successful at engaged in more market oriented farms. It is anticipated that there are unexplored opportunities for further inspection within vegetable value chains that could improve opportunities for women to further engage in markets on their own terms.

1.4 Research Problem

This research proposes a descriptive analysis of a population of smallholder farmers in Nepal who are more engaged in commercialized enterprises through their vegetable business. It will look specifically at tactics utilized by female and male farmers achieving success, and will work to decipher the level of agency women farmers experience through engagement in a more commercialized vegetable business.

Problem statement: Women’s empowerment through market engagement has failed to permeate the discourse on agricultural development in Nepal. Once the experience of women engaged in a more market oriented vegetable businesses and their perceived sense of empowerment is better understood, efforts to enhance gender inclusivity in Nepal’s agricultural market development can be reinforced.

Objective 1: Determine the knowledge and experience of smallholder farmers engaging in more market-oriented businesses.
1.1 Examine the gendered nature of the vegetable market for a commercialized enterprise and smallholder farmers’ perceived role in the market.

1.2 Discover knowledge of market engagement challenges and issues, and their impact in daily management strategies.

Objective 2: Distinguish the extent to which being engaged in a commercialized market contributes to a woman’s empowerment.

2.1 Compare the gendered experience of farmers and how they perceive opportunities to improve their operation.

2.2 Determine the benefits of women operating their own farm businesses by analyzing the enabling and disenabling factors.

While there is ample literature available regarding vegetable value chain analysis and agricultural development in Nepal, it remains largely unknown if women farmers are positively impacted by further engagement in high value vegetable markets. This research is interested in exploring if women experience a heightened sense of agency when engaged in commercialized market scenarios and if not, where the areas for improvement may be. Hence further exploration into women and their participation in the more market focused value chain is imperative, particularly when considering the window of opportunity currently offered by the Government of Nepal to the industry. Furthermore considering the Nepal is a net food importer, it is anticipated that the nature of the market in this study will be regional or locally situated.
1.5 Study Rationale

The rationale for this research is based around achieving a closer inspection of women’s inclusion in local markets, as this to be the way out of poverty for many smallholder farmers according to many development initiatives. According to Slater and Page in a 2003 article on smallholder producer involvement in global food systems, they contend that there is a renewed interest at the global level of a market approach to poverty alleviation. The World Bank identifies that there are three main ways rural households exit poverty: “through agricultural entrepreneurship; through the rural labor market and the rural nonfarm economy; and through migrating to towns, cities, or other countries” (World Bank, 2008: 72). The issue this research focuses on, is that it is not well understood, nor included in many parts of the literature, (specifically government produced documents such as market development plans) whether or not women actually benefit from the commercialization process. Increasing the understanding of women and their experience in commercialized agricultural enterprises in Nepal would provide benefit to many programs already underway in the agricultural development arena. Furthermore there is great benefit to the promotion of the inclusion of women, and recognition of their accomplishments insofar as having the ability to continue to balance power dynamics between the genders, and approach means through which more equality can be experienced between the genders.
1.6 Summary

This chapter introduced the main research problem and research summary to give an overview of the chapters that will follow. The following chapter is a literature review that delves into the broad range of influencing factors specific to creating and enabling and disenabling environment that influences the development of gender relations in Nepal. It does so by investigating the position of women in not only society but also within vegetable markets, and places these processes within a larger context of globalization and capitalism. It will set the conceptual stage of the theoretical framework, which will later underpin the analysis of this research.
Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Background

This literature review provides an overview of the current status of Nepal as a developing nation. It begins with review of poverty and its impact on development indicators for both men and women. The review next moves more specifically to discuss the status of women and the barriers women face in improving their livelihoods and in turn that of their families. Next is an overview of food and nutrition security, which is closely tied to the topic of land: geography and poverty and land tenure and in turn has linkages to the emerging capitalist system of landowners owning their means of production for personal gains. Following is then a gendered subsector analysis for the vegetable system in Nepal, which concludes that investigating women vegetable farmers for the purpose of this research is pertinent to women’s development and development of the agricultural sector in general. The last two sections build on the previous sections by delving deeper into the topic of women in commercialized value chains, and the relationship between gender and agriculture in Nepal.

2.1.1 Poverty in Nepal

Nepal is considered one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world with 55 per cent of the population living below the poverty line and around 37 per cent of those classified as “severely impoverished” (Oxfam, 2013). The World Bank has seen a drastic decline in the poverty headcount ratio development indicator whereby in 1985, 93.6 per cent of the population were using less than $2 per day
and 78.2 per cent of the population was using more than $1.25 per day for household expenses. The latest statistics show that in 2010 these numbers have dropped to 57 per cent of the population and 24.8 per cent respectively so despite the significant challenges to development Nepal faces, progress towards poverty alleviation and increased food security has been made. In fact, the 2013 Millennium Development Goal update report on Nepal notes that Nepal is considered “likely” to achieve most of its MDGs by the deadline and has furthermore achieved already the goal of reduced maternal mortality by three quarters and halving the spread of major disease. Gender equality and empowerment is the one goal that is noted as being “unlikely” to be achieved (UN, 2013).

The divide between urban and rural poverty is significant and complex. A report on program considerations for Nepal by USAID describes it as such:

...urban households tend to concentrate among the highest-wealth groups, while rural households tend to concentrate among the poor. Thus, any national comparison of the least poor with the most poor tends to compare the bulk of the urban population with the poorest of the rural poor, making it impossible to determine to what degree the findings reflect inequalities by wealth and/or inequalities by geography (USAID, 2011: 2).

Urban populations in Nepal typically benefit from wages twice that of the rural counterparts and poverty is 2.5 times more likely to occur in rural areas (Jerve, 2001). Agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy and employs 65 per cent of rural people, however economic development is more likely to occur in urban areas, as “public as well as private investments are highly urban-biased” thereby leaving rural dwellers at a disadvantage from the many opportunities investment would bring (Jerve, 2001: 98).
Further to this, the caste system in Nepal forces certain segments of the population (namely the Dalits and the indigenous Janjaits) further into poverty as many are landless wage laborers for higher caste farmers and tend to receive less than half the income compared to other castes (IFAD, 2013). More generally in a cultural sense women are marginalized at a household level as they have less to do with decision-making, receive fewer calories per person than the man in the household, and have a literacy rate 35 per cent less than men (Oxfam 2013, USAID 2011). Nepal is currently considered the 12th poorest country with the per capita income being on average $480 USD, a rate considerably lower than many other countries in South Asia (FAO, 2013).

To summarize, the levels of poverty in Nepal are acute and widespread, with the bulk of poverty and lack of opportunities residing in the rural areas where the bulk of the population lives. Gender inequality between men and women is also acute with women being more undernourished, less literate and having less opportunity for independent income streams than men.

2.1.2 The Status of Women in Nepal

A close inspection of the development indicators for men and women is one way to quantitatively assess how men and women are faring in terms of gender equity. A country profile report by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) states that the life expectancy of women as of 2001 is on par with men (61 years), which is an increase from 1991 where there was a two-year disparity (male expectancy 56 years and women 53.4 years). Overall life expectancy in the country
as of the 2013 UNDP Human development Index is 69. Literacy rates in adults differ being that 42.5 per cent of females and 65.1 per cent males are literate, despite over 80 per cent of females being enrolled in primary education and nearly a similar level (around 45 per cent) of females being enrolled in lower secondary as males (JICA, 2007). This leads one to question how girls are impacted by cultural barriers when considering issues such as menstruation, level of household labour, which falls largely on young girls and (and even when they are attending school, what treatment do girls receive?) (Mahat, 2003). Women’s health in Nepal is another area by which women are discriminated against. Despite the fact that their role in rural areas is generally seen as “bearing children, particularly sons”, access to maternal healthcare is limited and recognition and care for other major health concerns such as HIV/AIDS, chronic malnutrition and are also issues which for women receive inadequate treatment (Worec Nepal, 2013). Of girls who first had sex under the age of 15, 47 per cent did so without consent and furthermore “17 per cent of girls in the age group 15-19 have already had a birth or are pregnant with their first child” due in part to a staggering lack of access to information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (Worec, 2013: 4).

On the policy side there are increasing introductions of acts and policies that enable equal treatment of women and girls. Firstly, The Tenth Five Year Plan, which concluded in 2008, included a “policy of mainstreaming gender, reducing gender inequality and empowerment of women; and recognizing gender equality as a key indicator of poverty analysis” (JICA, 2007). In terms of land ownership, in 2006 ‘daughters’ were included as legitimate family members in relation to the land acts
and in 2002 were provided equal inheritance rights to sons (JICA, 2007). However treatment on paper does not match perception and implementation of these well-intentioned policies; many of these efforts heavily contradict the known reality that women are widely subject to physical violence and economic exclusion. A 2005 conference paper by Lyn Bennett of the World Bank concludes that policy changes such as these are actually attempting to change the culture of Nepal which can be a long process involving “mysterious process of social and institutional change” (2005:2). She contends that the political power dynamic is such that policy is being formed to suit the interests of a few power-seeking parties, and ultimately implementation is lagging for many new policies.

Women are often excluded from governance positions even when it is mandated that women be included. Such an example is outlined in the Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook where Nepali regional Village Development Committees were meant to have no less than 25 per cent women in them, many of which later reported they had few to no women, the highest group containing merely 8 per cent (World Bank, 2009). The Nepalese parliament is legislated to be comprised of 35 per cent women (and currently is at around 33 per cent) however women are often incapable of influencing anyone due to the power dynamic wherein males take the dominant and overbearing role (Wydra, et al., 2010). Despite moves toward gender equality on some political levels, on a socio-cultural level women’s disempowerment in politics and gender policy alike could be influenced by something noted in several post-conflict regions know as “golden-ageism, a prevalent societal wish, at times enforced through violence, to return to an imagined
golden age before the conflict, when society was supposedly in harmony, when youth respected their elders, and where women were subordinate to men” (Myrttinen, et al., 2014: 9). There is also a sense from the World Bank that “program implementers” may consider women’s unions or other groups to be taking care of women’s issues and as such more targeted interventions are not needed beyond those efforts (World Bank, 2009). Which ever of these is deemed the influencing cultural factors, the entrenched nature of several of these factors showcase the challenging nature of building gender equality into agricultural programming and beyond. As the Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook summarized, “growth and development in the sector simply cannot be done while ignoring women, who are the major actors” (2009: 3).

The 2007 JICA country report details the feminization of poverty whereby women, especially rural women, are disproportionately affected due to a range of reasons (lack of “access to healthcare, education, ownership of assets, and economic and social mobility”), but also noting a problem with aggregated household data being used to measure poverty instead of an individual account (Mahat, 2003; JICA, 2007: 10). The problem with aggregate household data is twofold. First, while data may reflect household parity between households or communities, individual members within a household could be treated differently. This could come in the form of differences between men and women for schooling graduate rates, internet use, cell phone ownership, migration for temporary labour, and could indicate differences in access to information, assets and opportunities. Having more specific household knowledge of household equity disparity would contribute to
appropriate investment into agricultural development, which are designed with gender equity issues at its core.

2.1.3 Food and Nutrition Security

Nepal has a challenging future ahead of it in terms of food security as it has a small amount of arable land relative to population size. Not only does an inadequate amount of land exist for the rising population, so too do issues with land use in terms of environmental degradation from deforestation and overgrazing, underutilization of agricultural holdings due to reliance on in some cases, inefficient and outdated farming methods, urban migration and intense population increase (UN, 1989). Unfortunately due to the continued political instability these issues existed two decades ago and continue to be some of the main problems plaguing land use in Nepal today.

Geographically Nepal has a varied landscape as it is made up of three very diverse regions: the terai and the inner terai (marshy lowland, 34,000km²), the hills (61,000km²), and the mountains (52,000km²) (FAO, 2013). According to the World Bank statistics, in 1980 Nepal had 0.16 ha per person and in 2011 had .09 ha per person. Less than 1 ha is considered too small even for subsistence living (IFAD, 2013). Figure 1.1 shows rates of population growth in Nepal by region, which when overlaid into soil types (discussed in 2.2.1) indicates areas which regional food production is low yet has increasing or higher populations. The need to intensively increase production per acre is evident however to adequately handle an increased product load, functioning markets are essential lest we flood the market, decrease
prices, and leave farmers with more work and similar, dismal pay.

Figure 1.1 (above) shows the rates of population growth by district, and also shows the three distinct topographical regions in Nepal. This research takes place in the hills, yet each of the three main city centers have unique features that relate to the agro climactic growing zone. Geography also plays a role in poverty distribution across the country as poverty is 2.5 times more likely to reside in the remote and rural spaces (Oxfam, 2013). Of the poorest, 45 per cent of individuals live in the western region and 46 per cent live in the far western region of the country (IFAD, 2013). This disparity is due largely to the terrain growing increasingly rugged west and north east of the capital, those areas receiving less rainfall, farm size being smaller than the rest of the country and generally having poorer soil for growing (IFAD, 2013). The urban-rural poverty divide is also significant largely due to an increased cost of living and access to staples, markets and other essentials for living in the more remote areas (IFPRI, 2011). In some parts of the hilly and mountainous regions, food can cost three times more than other areas, meaning that 60 per cent
of households spend 75 per cent of their income on household staples (IFPRI, 2011). Furthermore a UN statistic states that women earning their own wage tend to spend upwards of 90 per cent of that income on household expenses versus men who on average spend 30-40 per cent (UN, 2011).

Specific to population growth, Nepal has an incredibly rapidly increasing population relative to land size, and projections for future populations see the year 2021 exceeding 34 million people, the majority of which will live in the southern terai region of the country (Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal 2003). The terai region also happens to be where much of the food is grown.

Generally the terai and inner terai are the lowest altitude and so have the most favourable growing conditions and most ideal soil types for a wide variety of crops (FAO 2013). The lower mountains and hills are comprised of more marginal land with respect to lacking options for cultivation and so are used largely for grazing and due to overgrazing and deforestation the “steep mountain slopes” are slowly degrading into desert (IFAD 2010). According to this same report, “land degradation is often a cause and a consequence of rural poverty” (IFAD, 2010: 2).

In terms of labour, the agricultural workforce in Nepal is critically important as well as complex. The World Bank, Little Green Data Book 2013 shows that agricultural labour in 1991 accounted for around 81 per cent of the population, in 1999 was 76 per cent and in 2001 dropped down to 66 per cent and at present is an estimated 70 per cent (although some statistics state 75 per cent and range to an upwards of 80 per cent and above). It is estimated that during the years of conflict, over 10,985 people were murdered and around 150,000 people were displaced,
most of whom were rural dwellers which can account for the drop in agricultural labour during that time (Shrestha, 2005). Around the same time in the period between 1990 to 1999, remittances being received by urban populations went up by 290 per cent and rural by 139 per cent which reflects a massive shift in the type of labour that was supporting Nepalese households during the conflict and post conflict periods. Gains in reducing levels of poverty are largely attributed to remittances and migration to urban areas (IFPRI, 2011). The increase in remittances also contributes to more women headed households and also cash flow that isn’t direct foreign investment into the country (IFPRI 2011). Despite this influx of cash, rural populations still saw a lesser decline in poverty rates in that same timeframe because of declining wage rates as compared to the urban counterparts (IFPRI, 2011). This was partly attributed to land transactions (land grabs), which happened when Maoists insurgents sold off tracts of land of those landowners who fled the violence (USAID, 2010). Once the Maoists stepped down as ruling party, there was controversy as to whether or not those transactions should be deemed legal or not, and many of them were upheld (USAID, 2010 until otherwise noted).

On the topic of land tenure, decades of changing reforms, civil upheaval, migration and a very informal or undocumented system of land deeds have led overall to a tenuous land system. Despite this, over 65 per cent of those occupying land, claim ownership either formally or informally. In the case of women, around 8 per cent of land is registered in women’s names and around 5 per cent of land is held by women overall. According to the chart in table 2 (below), a small proportion
of individuals described as “the top 5 per cent” of rural dwellers, hold the largest proportion of land, where as around 50 per cent of smallholders hold much less land (27 per cent) (USAID, 2010; Sharma, 1999).

| Table 1.1: Land ownership by country for smallholder farmers |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Country                | % Smallholders | % Land base |
| India                  | 80 %          | 36 %        |
| Pakistan               | 58 %          | 15 %        |
| Uganda                 | ~75 %         | 27 %        |
| Ecuador                | 43 %          | 2 %         |
| Ukraine                | 99 %          | 8 %         |

Nepal: ~50% smallholder population 17% land
5% (elite) population 27% land
10% rural dwellers landless

(Sources: Nagayets, FAO; USAID, 2010.)

Because the paper trail of ownership is so loosely managed, owners renting land to farmers often times evict them from the land in less than two years so the ‘tillers’ are not able to claim 50 per cent ownership of the land as per current regulation. This has led to a massive amount of land being left fallow for fear of these claims being made, which in a country with severe food security issues is a major issue.

There are several land ownership classes: owner-operated (owner-tillers), state and government land, Guthi (religious and philanthropic uses, >.03 per cent), and sharecropping or rented land (Regmi, 1976 until otherwise noted)

Sharecropping can either be adihya, a tenant providing labour with the owner providing some inputs and then a “50-50” split of the profits is meant to ensue; however this is rarely the case. There is also thekka where the tenant pays with a fixed share of production to the owner. Other instances which are largely unaccounted for involve bonded labour or exploitive practices (USAID, 2010). Size
and quality of land correlate directly with socioeconomic status meaning that 76 per cent of the poor are small and marginal landowners. Land reforms completed in 2007, have been largely deemed to be ineffective due to lack of political will. They were aimed at redistributing land to landless or land constrained households as well as creating ceilings on land parcel size. While women technically have a historic and current right to land ownership either through purchase, inheritance or otherwise, the system is highly flawed and often time works by following cultural norms which allocate land to sons or patrilineal lines in the case of death, or to the male of the household in the case of divorce (USAID, 2010). By and large, the system revamp was working towards elimination of feudalism and the elimination of forced labour and exploitive practices, however the implementation and political will to make it happen fell short. More recent amendments are underway, however evidence of this working on the ground is yet to be seen.

These reforms to land tenure are seemingly linked to a larger political movement especially when considering Nepal’s 2004 accession into the World Trade Organization. In a June 10, 2013 Op-ed piece by Chaitanya Mishra, the Nepali writer states “all major left and ostensibly ’communist’ parties, ideologues and political leaders have come to realize that Nepal, after all, is no longer a 'semi-feudal’ state.” Mishra later argues for a natural, capitalist-run economy and a movement away from state-run capitalism proliferated by the capitalist elites, of this he states that “national capitalism is increasingly hogwash” (Mishra, 2013). A review of Sujeev Shakya’s book Unleashing Nepal summarizes the writer’s position that he has “faith in the private sector, a market-oriented capitalism and a State that can deliver
welfare for all citizens” however recognizes the recent behaviour of the private sector as being corrupt and self-serving, which means a full realization of a functioning capital market will take time and stronger political will (Rana, 2013: 3).

Some contributing factors to this shift in economic systems is due to foreign aid largely from the US, India and China, which has increased substantially since the sixties. Of this Samira Luitel states:

The American aid projects in the early years were specifically designed to fight communism with the encouragement of the American system of education. Another example was that the major part of the aid given by India and China was to road building projects that linked their boundary with Nepal again for their own political interest. (Luitel, ND: 206).

For some this could mean connecting smallholders to the global commodity market. Nepal is situated between two very powerful neighbours and as such is subject to their interests especially when considering trade more specifically. Currently in order to create comparative advantage, tariffs have been set much lower than the average trading partner (14 per cent versus the average 40 per cent for many countries). However this must change in the coming years in order for Nepal to fulfill its tariff matching responsibilities to the WTO regulations (World Bank, 2003 until otherwise noted). Nepal generally has a comparative advantage in labour intensive manufactured products (such as precious metals) and agricultural products (because of high amounts of cheap labour) and as such relies on these outputs for trade. Significant barriers to export occur however with high transport costs and again, being landlocked, reliance on its neighbour India for shipping abroad which is largely why it has increased reliance on China and India for trade.

On the import side 18 per cent of imports are machinery and transportation
machines, 17 per cent chemicals and 13 per cent food products, 45 per cent of which comes from India.

Looking to the future, maintaining good relations with India and China will be of paramount importance as shipping goods will always be a constraint on getting Nepal’s products abroad. The World Bank sees political stability as a major area of development to continue increasing Nepal’s position as a good trading partner (World Bank, 2013). The continuous change in political parties has led to an unfavorable business climate which has limited private and public investment despite the various comparative advantages some of Nepal’s products offer (World Bank, 2002).

2.3 Women’s Engagement in Commercialized Value Chains

The main issue with women in value changes hinges largely on the level of vulnerability women face due to the nature of their employment within the system. According to the FAO, men tend to occupy higher status higher pay positions, whereas women are generally found doing work for wages and are often the first to be let go during times of market fluctuations (FAO, 2010). According to this same brief, women often face higher barriers to entry than men. In particular they have less access to information related to commercialization namely starting a business, technologies and market related information (FAO, 2010). Furthermore, Pingali, Khwaja, and Meijer (2005) contend that “the structural changes in the food system brought about by commercialization have raised the costs of exchange for both staple and high-value crop producers. These transaction costs are a significant
variable that can inhibit small farmer entry into competitive markets” (p. 4). Within a household, even if a woman were in the lead position in the business she could very well have access to these resources yet still face a barrier when engaging in market transactions. Men are often in those positions of trader and buyers which is essentially the gateway to the market.

A comparative report on Markets for Poor (M4P) and Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches (SLA) contends that transformation within markets needs to happen through a process of self-identification, which can only happen through increased knowledge of the markets one works within (Albu & Schneider, 2008). Access to market extension helps farmers decrease costs and increase their bargaining power (Albu & Schneider, 2008). In a more general sense, farmers may have that access, however, a question to pose is whether that knowledge is shared among members of the household, and whether individuals in the household are able to act or make decisions equally. In Nepal specifically, the dynamics of decision-making can vary quite drastically from area to area.

Many studies have been done in Nepal at the household level that are aimed at deciphering who is making what decision in the farming operation. The general consensus is that household decision making changes drastically depending on where the study was completed and with what ethnic, religious or caste group was being studied. In an undated report by Devkota, Rauniyar and Parker, they concurred with several other studies of the same nature and geographical area that ultimately, “the majority of the decisions taken by Nepalese rural residents concerning agricultural production and marketing were made jointly by males and
females” (Devkota et al., ND: 2). This study did however recognize they were basing their findings on research done in an area where “substantial progress {has been} made by women since 1981” and that women would be more reluctant to take decisions on their own in instances such as hiring labour but generally, the family was involved in most decisions (Devkota, et al., ND). A broader study based on a 2006 Demographic Health Survey found generally that “Women’s autonomy in decision making is positively associated with their age, employment and number of living children” (Acharya, et al., 2010: 11). Moreover it was noted that women in rural and western areas (farther from the capital city) did not show this same trend and were seen as less able to make decisions regarding household purchases and visiting of her own extended family (Acharya, et al. 2010). The importance of this discussion is based wholly on a significant correlation between individuals who have decision making power and receiving “a larger share of the benefits from household resources including food” (IFPRI, 2014). Women who are able to make decisions regarding cropping variety as well as other agricultural decisions tend to have children who have improved health indicators, even though the mothers themselves do not necessarily share those gains (IFPRI, 2014). However Andrea Cornwall states in her paper “Who’s Voices, Who’s Choices” that access to resources and decision-making is perhaps a trivial way of determining gender equity. In reference to data collected from Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) tools, she states “if gender means ‘ask the women too’ then the product of the PPAs will likely be gender-disaggregated data that have been gathered with little attention to gender dynamics, gender relations, or the contexts in which the data were
produced” (Cornwall, 2003: 1336). Sally Armstrong notes in her book *Ascent of Women* that “measuring the changes by wins isn’t always the best strategy... {it is to} know that, at last {women’s} voices are heard, that the status quo is not sustainable and that victory is out there” (p 81). In this sense, to measure decision making or access to resources may not be adequate as a means of determining one’s sense of agency or sense of empowerment. Cornwall may feel that empowerment relates to not only the ability to make decisions, but also the ability to change the decisions that may be on offer (Reeves & Baden, 2000). Thus the appropriate tool or methodology for data collection must be closely interrogated lest we confuse “gender with women’s issues” and ultimately obscure the distinct dimensions through which men and women experience poverty (Cornwall, 2003).

The general trend indicates that markets are gender neutral and that money is gendered so even if women are able to control the market engagement, the outcome of women utilizing any increased profits does not necessarily follow (Meinzen-Dick, 2007). Women who are players in markets are seen as having increased status due to the economic influence their decisions can have on a household (Acharya, 1983). This notion is especially potent in the context of the increasingly globalized nature of those markets. Chandra Mohanty argues in her 2003 book *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, that we need to develop more “grounded, particularized [gender] analyses linked with larger, even global, economic and political frameworks”. Mohanty sees feminism as a diverse understanding of women and men’s lives in the context of how larger capitalist, globalist, and corporatist processes affect different people
differently. She bridges this individualistic view to the larger problems such as the naturalization of capitalism, and seeks to support better understanding of the theories, which underlie the universal concerns of the economically oppressed (Mohanty, 2003). This she calls anti-capitalist transnational feminist practice, an attempt at crossing borders and creating solidarity aimed at reversing the “racist, patriarchal, heterosexist relations of rule” she sees as the means by which our current paradigm ‘capitalism,’ dominates (Mohanty, 2003: 231). These ideas are especially poignant when one understands the more intimate details of how the capitalist value chain of vegetables functions.

2.3.1 Vegetable Subsector and Stakeholder Analysis

This research proposes to investigate the status of women farmers as agricultural entrepreneurs within the vegetable subsector of agriculture. The following section analyzes the gendered roles within the Nepalese vegetable value chain.

2.3.2 Smallholders and Vegetable Value Chain Engagement

The current vegetable value chain operates not without major constraints and issues of power over the farmers who work within it, in particular with certain roles being fulfilled primarily by one gender only. To illustrate its mode of operation it is necessary to understand the typical vegetable value chain layout in Nepal, and understand its constraints for smallholders. Figure 1.2 lays out the value chain and includes gender notations of where men and women are typically active along the chain.
2.3.3 Gendered Stakeholder Analysis

*Input supplier:* This actor is often absent from many remote areas, however in the peri-urban areas of this study, they are often able to maintain supply of input goods such as seed, fertilizer or pesticides to farmers. The issue is often purchasing and supplying on economy of scale to farmers to achieve fair prices, or for smallholders to purchase quality for a reasonable price. The USAID estimates that if women had fair access to inputs the yield of their farm could go up by as much as 20-30 per cent, however in this instance women are not receiving equal access (USAID, 2011). NGO and Government input suppliers use more equitable and use gender inclusive practices than private business suppliers, but likely do not represent the mainstream.
Farmers: This is a heterogeneous group and as previously stated, 1 per cent of farmers in Nepal are commercial whereas 21 per cent of farmers are market oriented (household consumption and sales of product) and the remainder are subsistence level farms (Samriddhi Prosperity Foundation, 2011). Female farmers comprise over 90 per cent of farmers in Nepal and as such, face the double dilemma of oppression by virtue of being small farm operators, and being female (FAO, ND). Male farmers are more easily able to negotiate better pricing from traders, have better access to training (or more often take advantage because of literacy), and are engaged in more activities with direct economic benefit in addition to getting wages nearly twice that of what women are able to obtain (IRIN, 2012; FAO, 2010). Women often spend more time during the day doing weeding, harvesting, threshing, land preparation, milling and harvesting as compared to men who undertake plowing, but not carrying of heavy loads such as manure, wood or other supplies (FAO, 2010). It is also noted that in many areas of Nepal women work an average of 3 hours longer than men work (FAO, 2010). Due to lack of knowledge, women are often unable to purchase good quality inputs (such as non-expired seed), practice professional farming, and therefore lack the confidence necessary to negotiate better prices or make demands for resources.

Collectors: Collection groups can come in the form of grassroots farmer groups, NGO (or less likely Government) induced groups, or simply individual business people with the appropriate means to collect and deliver larger amounts of produce. Collectors often hold knowledge on market pricing, and often change pricing to make it more favourable to them despite the natural price of the day, however when it is a cooperative style collection group they operate more equitably for men and women farmers. In the scenario where farmers have access to both their own and another source of collection, they have increased ability to arrange a better price, but are ultimately needing to sell quickly due to the perishability of their product and associated lack of storage capacity, or even the ability to go direct to market themselves. Farmers need collectors, and often a leader in a given community will organize other farmers to sell together in an informal collection deal to the next
collector in the chain. Collectors are often men and in farmer collection groups it is often a man who is paid to run the group.

**Traders and Wholesalers:** Much like the collectors, traders and wholesalers are needed to get the product to the market. These actors are often men, and often function in a similar fashion to the non-NGO collectors whereby their interest is in maximizing profits for themselves. At the very large Kalimati market, issues with price collusion have run rampant causing the government to have to take a look at the problem, while never really ever solving it (Republica, 2012).

**Retailing:** Retailers can range from farmers owning their own shops, to small independent shops to large supermarkets in Kathmandu. Vegetables are mostly sold through a market stall economy, with a huge number of shops selling different types of produce at different times of the year. Farmers dealing directly with retailers are able to undercut wholesalers thereby garnering a better price for themselves and earning a reputation as a preferred supplier of vegetables. Retailers are often male or female or are a business owned by both, however as dominant market prices often prevail, they follow the influence of purchasing at prices dictated by the traders or middlemen. This could mean, that even if women are dealing with women, since the majority of the “price makers” are men, and so women maintain the “price taker” role their gender is subject to.

To summarize, a more thorough review of the stakeholders involved in the vegetable value chain reveals power bottlenecks at the point where finances are involved. Women lack access to the means to earn more from what they have. Women and men are less able to negotiate or bargain with traders and middlemen, but in a time of feminization of agriculture, more women are subject to prices set by others. Women are involved in downstream activities of the value chain but are likely subject to dominant market prices, to their own betterment, but not on their own accord.
2.5 Agriculture and gender in Nepal

A discussion paper by the FAO indicates that there is not only a great lag in agricultural development but it is also largely caused by the inability of women to access to productive resources (FAO, 2011). Women’s goals for the business also tend to be based on improved nutrition and schooling for their children and not for themselves, whereas men would tend not to think in terms of their ‘family first’ and would prefer profits over welfare (Regmi, 2009). This is especially supported when considering that improved agricultural growth and development do not necessarily lead to improved health and nutrition outcomes for women themselves (Blaikie, et al., 2002). Furthermore, women’s businesses tend to be of a smaller size and so are subject to a higher level of volatility, and are incapable of leveraging credit to grow the business (either due to their small size or lack of knowledge) (Regmi, 2009).

The investigation into improved women’s empowerment is challenging in the case of Nepal as it would seem that culturally the decreased status of women is because social class is largely determined at birth due to the caste system, which hinders social mobility, and entrenched within this system is gender bias (Sankalpa, 2013). Furthermore their means of livelihood are generally much more diverse than that of men:

producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. (Sankalpa, 2013: 2)

However many of these activities are not deemed viable economic employment (FAO, 2011). This same report indicates that for women in South East Asia, agricultural employment is ‘much more important for women than men’ however
due to the male dominated political sphere the value of women’s contributions is clearly being undermined. Razavi in her 2009 article says that female labor is commoditized through a process of “exclusionary, hierarchical, and exploitive” treatment of women, whereby a certain ignorance of the intricacies of the household politics leads to the undervaluation of the reproductive capacity of women (in addition to regular productive labour) to produce ‘citizens/workers’ who in turn contribute to society (Razavi, 2009:198). She implies that this causes a larger proportion of women becoming trapped at the bottom of higher earning potential opportunities as well as being denied ownership of land and other productive assets, due to the ‘social regulation’ structures that govern this process (2009). To summarize, Ela Bhatt has said, “We are not educated about our own reality of the fact that most poor women work, and that their work adds to the national GDP” (UNGEI, ND:1), which broadens the conversation to include the socio-economic role of women in a society where feudalism, caste and patriarchy all “reinforce each other in causing discrimination and extreme socio-political and economic inequality” (USAID, 2008:12).

At the very core of gender equality is often times a discussion of the empowerment of women, as they are even still deemed the inferior sex or the second sex, as Simone de Beauvoir would put it, if not overtly then in a more tenuous form within a given culture. As noted in the book Ascent of Women, it is critical to determine the ‘methodology of oppression’ for Nepalese women farmers, especially in the context of a “highly stratified and hierarchical social structure [that] has tended to limit access to resources and economic opportunity” as USAID
describes Nepal in its 2010 paper on property rights and governance (Armstrong, 2013; USAID, 2010: 1). In her book, Armstrong argues that talking is one antidote to oppression meaning, giving women a forum to meet and have their voices legitimately heard is a large part of their own empowerment process. Pant and Batharai (2013) argue that it is essential to find niches where women are able to bargain and negotiate. They describe how this is particularly difficult for women in Nepal as there are multiple facets of oppression on young women being that young women are subject to fathers and mothers, their husbands, and their mother in law during the different phases of life (layered within a broader context of structural patriarchy) (Pant and Batharai, 2013). Patrick Welsh in his 2010 article discusses these opposing forces and describes the “silent complicity” of men or those oppressors who don’t necessarily subscribe to the notion of women’s oppression per se, but are complicit in its realization because they “enjoy the benefits it bestows” (2010: 301). His argument is that silent complicity is the methodology that maintains this inequality and perpetuates it over time, however this places both blame and power entirely on men, and in my estimation does not go far enough to describe disempowerment over time. Perhaps it is the women who allow this behavior for other economic or social reasons?

When we consider the methods of oppression for women in Nepal we can see that they are numerous and change throughout a woman’s lifecycle. In this way we can begin to understand the importance of identifying a niche, such as a specific value chain, and analyzing not only the players within the chain and what their roles are, but also employing a gender lens to decipher the inequalities that are
happening for both women and men within the chain. Working within the value chain construct, the roles can be fleshed out in a more subtle and complex manner. This brings to light possible tools which can be used within a given value chain that take the data beyond the household level and into the interpersonal level where the crux of hegemonic masculine dominance resides (Welsh, 2010).

Not surprisingly the ways of defining and measuring empowerment are evolving and a most recent iteration of this, is in the form of approaching women's development through a gender lens that “looks at women and men in their relative positions within the socio-economic, political, and cultural structures” (Tasli, 2007:23). This is an important evolution as women and men live together in a typical Nepali household, and as such it is important to consider the social relations between men and women and also work towards a more harmonious ends versus simply allowing women more access to household resources or decisions. The question this research is inquiring about is whether one means of shifting this power dynamic is through women’s engagement in the market, and thus their involvement in profitable farming operations. To get there as well, we must also draw upon the theories developed by Chandra Mohanty who’s transnational, neo-marxist, feminist critique is also rooted in anti-capitalistic and racialised issues, lends to a dynamic area of thought related to justice versus profits, and other “injustices of global capitalism” (Mohanty, 2003:234). We simply do not know if women are benefitting from engagement in market-oriented enterprises, and if it does come in the form of empowerment, which social spheres or niches are being affected.
2.6 Conceptual Framework

Over the course of this literature review I have outlined the key issues facing women in market oriented farm enterprises today: poverty in Nepal, the status of women and linkages to policy gaps, food security and its association to land, labour and a move towards capitalism, women and commercialization including a gendered subsector analysis of the vegetable value chain. This ultimately looks closely at the components of gender and agriculture in order to reveal the niche where women can become more empowered.

The conceptual framework is based on representing the opposing influencing factors that pressure farmers to make the choices they do. It is also supported by a series of questions, which are meant to more closely frame the research problem of better understanding women's empowerment in market oriented vegetable farm businesses in order to better support the discourse on agricultural development in Nepal. The visual model (figure 1.4) captures the main opposing forces discussed in this literature review, such as using commercialized agriculture as a means of poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment, and the gendered structures within agriculture that ultimately hold small farms back. At the center are the women farmers themselves, who are identified by the key informants as being more ‘market oriented’ or more commercialized. The notions of entrepreneurship, training, market access and male migrant labour are considered opportunities for women’s empowerment, whereas societal patriarchy, middlemen and lack of education are considered sizable barriers. Furthermore, the conceptual framework recognizes that
Figure 1.3 Conceptual framework

People operate within a system of micro (field level), meso (institutions and markets) and macro (policy) levels of influence. Using multiple levels of analysis.

Independent variables:  Current interventions, individual & cooperative, extension | Gender policies | Access to remittance/off farm income, local infrastructure | Incentives, education, age/gender/caste | Location, land tenure, assets

Poverty reduction
Improved livelihood
Feminisation of agriculture
Improved status of women
Access to capital
Government inclusion efforts
Value chain opportunities

Female vegetable farmers perceived as commercialised

Agricultural economy
Access to inputs
Subsistence farming
Illiteracy
decision making ability
Less access to household wealth
Gender policy/reality disconnect

How is the business is currently being operated? How were they learned (developmental assessment)?
- Record keeping, COP, decision making
- What level of planning is appropriate
- Level of familiarity with ‘markets’, engagement in value chain?
- What type of family farm are they? (subsistence, subsistence with potential, moving to commercialization)

Interplay between individual versus the system (Development and livelihood assessment)
- Cooperative, value chain
- What has changed since joining the business?
- Are they prepared for opportunity (livelihood and developmental analysis- socioeconomic conditions of the region; policies that facilitate the initiative, access and control of resources)

Impacts and outcomes (Livelihood assessment pre-program vs. post)
- Improved livelihood status based on framework
- More engagement in markets, market influence
- Access to information

What does the value chain look like for vegetables? (Stakeholder analysis)
- Gender roles along the value chain
- Professional farmers & culture change
- What role does gender play within the vegetable market?

Critique of empowerment (Stakeholder priorities - what needs to be done)
- Are females running their own business really more empowered within the system? (individual or empowerment through collective action)
- Are their wants/needs being addressed
- Have gender relations changed

Theory: Livelihoods and Gender development appraisal
- Livelihoods assets
- Synthesised gender appraisal tools
helps to better understand the linkages and areas of influence between those societal levels (FAO, 2001).

2.7 Summary

This literature review provides an overview of agricultural development in Nepal and the importance of women's full engagement in agricultural value chains in making progress happen. Determining empowerment in a more precise manner, and exploring the specific domains in which women are and are not empowered, allows development practitioners to tailor their programming towards actual needs rather than higher level, general needs of women. This research deals with the niche of more commercialized vegetable businesses in order to decipher if women within those enterprises are experiencing a heightened ability to exert agency within these operations. It furthermore seeks to contribute to the body of literature that can support both regional and national level efforts towards a more gender inclusive development strategy.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this section, the ontological and epistemological perspectives that form the basis of the research project origins of the research are provided as well as an. I also outline the reasoning behind the site selection and logistics, working with the research assistants and the interview translation process, and the methods and tools for the research itself. Then the data analysis is outlined and lastly is a discussion of the research limitations. The research employs a descriptive analysis of a population of smallholder farmers in Nepal, in order to better understand the level of agency experienced by women in a commercialized vegetable operation.

3.2 Epistemology: A critical feminist perspective

This research is taking a gendered approach to the overarching capitalist structure in which vegetable farmers operate, beginning with on farm roles and extending to the local vegetable value chain. It surmises that more equitable inclusion of women into this market structure allows them to operate their own affairs with a sense of agency, a privilege not afforded equally to both genders in many agricultural arenas. From one perspective, this can be seen as a means of gender mainstreaming, which Elisabeth Prügl would say is a practice that “targets the State as an apparatus that produces and implements policies. It brings to bear organizational rationality on the irrationality of unfair gender bias, and in this way promises to make visible and destabilize gendered structures and practices” (Prügl, 2009: 176). In the case of agricultural development, the Agricultural Perspective
Plans and other strategic planning documents aimed at economic and on farm improvements have neglected to meaningfully include women (Cameron, 2002). In addition, Nepal is a highly patriarchal society that often proves to be a strong roadblock for gender equality. As such it is critical to scrutinize the assumptions that lay behind not only what is happening with women and markets but, to support Cynthia Enloe’s belief, also to be curious about why. To support this part of the critical analysis, this research includes insight from Chandra Mohanty who ties the individual or ‘the local’ to the universal, which achieves a ‘multilayered contextual analysis’ (Mohanty, 2003: 224). Her main interest is not only in enhancing our ability as feminists to cross borders in a meaningful way, but to also question the underlying, naturalized capitalist values of our time, that create an increasing distance between the “haves and have not’s”, that decreases one’s ability to act with agency (2003:226).

3.2.1 The researcher

Being Canadian, the researcher conducted the research with an outsider status, which comes with positives and negatives (Sherry, 2008). Firstly, the researcher’s primary experience with Nepali culture before going to the field was through an extensive literature review, as well as through mentoring from her Nepali advisor Laxmi Pant. While this lack of in field experience could be seen as a liability because of the inability to interpret cultural nuance or lack access to conversations due to a language barrier, in some respects it provides an objective viewpoint required for critical analysis of the issues. Despite being a female non-
Nepali, the researcher was able to meet with and have frank discussions with both male leaders in NGOs as well as real and personal conversations with female and male smallholders. The positionality of the researcher allowed her to navigate multiple spheres of influence in order to gather a robust view of the issues at hand. It is dually recognized that due to the overseas nature of the researcher, it is quite plausible that participants were not being entirely honest in their interviews due to anticipation of personal gains, or other factors that could skew their response. To mitigate some of these concerns, the researcher was committed to a continual reflection of these biases through discussion with advisors and other local Nepali people which whom she developed relationships. The continual consent process for respondents included an explanation that no monetary or other compensation would be provided by the researcher or research assistant. As far as ensuring the reliability of the data, the researcher worked with colleagues and advisors to ensure intercoder reliability of the qualitative data, and as well triangulation of methods and data sources, was used. This part of the research is explained in detail in section 3.5 Data Sources and collection methods. Furthermore the translators employed for the data collection portion of the study were thoroughly trained and apprised of the research objectives as well as their role in the study.

3.3 Origins of the Research

Nepal has made its mark in the agricultural development field specifically since such a large proportion of Nepalese people depend on their farm and rural business as a main source of income. Since there are perhaps over 50,000 NGOs
operating in Nepal (~5000 of those ‘credible’ according to the NGO Federation of Nepal), there are a wide variety of activities happening in the fields (NFN, 2015). In many development projects the focus tends to be on ‘growing more from less’ and looking at physical resources as a means of increasing income. This approach could potentially limit the success of farmers who could potentially benefit from learning the basics of farm business management: cost of production, price negotiation, record keeping, taking orders, value chain development, and of course, advanced agricultural practices along side of the business side. For this reason, the research took on a more business side approach to farming. It attempted to seek out farmers who are progressing towards a more commercial vegetable business, and are motivated to expand their business in a commercial fashion. But, while being a commercial business-person for some is an end unto itself, for women farmers, I thought it pertinent to investigate whether a commercialized livelihood helps with their empowerment. Further anecdotal information also indicates that money is method of eliminating caste or class discrimination.

My position on the subject was originally based on Western ideals, and based on the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), a tool developed by USAID and launched in 2012. The researcher originally intended to use the (WEIA) tool, a quantitative tool that seeks to measure empowerment through a standardized questionnaire. Initial analysis of the tool itself revealed that the tool may not fit all contexts in all places, and so revisions would have needed to be made for the tool to work in Nepal’s country context. The Research Ethics Board was hesitant to allow the researcher to use such a lengthy and seemingly invasive tool
with the farmers, so ultimately it was dropped as a data collection tool. In its place, previous iterations of questionnaires that led up to the WEIA were revised and used to create the questionnaire, which upon starting the research was further revised to suit the cultural nuances of Nepalese farmers.

Thus the research analysis will take an approach that is a revised version of the WEIA with the addition of using the force-field theoretical framework developed from the literature review. The force field analysis is not quantitative like the WEAI and is better suited to qualitatively investigating women’s empowerment. It includes both gender and socio-economic factors to determine the enabling and disenabling factors of one’s empowerment. The farmer questionnaire and key informant interviews are based on a modified version of previous iterations of the WEIA as noted in appendix B. Furthermore by nature of the respondents being more market oriented, it was anticipated that most if not all farmer respondents would be involved to some extent in commercial training. This research took place over 8 weeks from October to November 2014 and happened in several geographic locations. It aimed at interviewing and better understanding mostly women and some men farmers who are situated in areas more conducive to market oriented farming.

3.4 Site Selection, Research Assistance and Logistics

This study relied on the kindness of strangers to gain community entry. As the original plan to be based in one location with one NGO fell through, I had to reach out to fellow classmates as well as over the internet to become connected with
NGO workers who work directly with women and men vegetable farmers who are more market oriented. Luckily one contact in Kathmandu named Anamika Aryal was preparing for fall training with women vegetable farmers so she welcomed me to interview those women as well as organized field visits around the valley. In Pokhara and Tansen some pre-departure contact was made through a classmate Rajan Chhatkuli who had recently left his development job in Nepal to do studies at SEDRD. He gave me several contacts to informants who also connected me with farmers. My Research Assistants/Translators were two young students, Jeny Paudyal and Ezina KC who were keen to participate in the study by providing translation and logistical support. A pause for some discussion on their role should follow, as they were integral to the entire data collection process.

3.4.1 Migrant labor: Around 15 per cent of eligible working men in Nepal are migrant laborers, with women accounting for around 2 per cent (Maharjan, et. al. 2012). Anecdotal information from several key informant interviews indicated this rate was higher, at around 20 per cent in the Kathmandu valley. According to an undated ICIMOD report, remittance flow is highest in “the Eastern Development Region, followed by the Central, Western, and, finally, Far Western, and Mid Western Development Regions” (Sherpa, ND:8). Refer to Figure 3.1 to observe the geography of these areas. Kathmandu is based in the Central region while Pokhara and Tansen are based in the Western region.
3.4.2 Regional Pricing: Kathmandu has the most sophisticated method of tracking prices as the Kalimati Marketing Board provides them on the daily online as well as by text message or calling in on their hotline. Members simply call the number to hear the daily wholesale and retail prices of the vegetables they are seeking to sell. Historical prices are also available. The Agro Enterprise Centre, the agricultural wing of the chamber of commerce which focuses on expanding markets in the agricultural sector, lists commodity prices online for many regions including Tansen and for Pokhara farmers can call The Pokhara Agriculture Information and Research Consultation Center (PAIRCC) for the cost of 1 rupee per minute. At the time of writing this no information could be found online which supports a comparison of Pokhara vegetable pricing, but anecdotally it was said that vegetable prices are higher in Pokhara due to its high tourist character. Prices are subject to availability of the produce in question, and are influenced by season and weather, as well as local competition (for example, imports), however an analysis for a 3 week stretch of commonly consumed vegetables such as tomatoes, cauliflower, chili peppers,
white potato and carrot, is that commodity prices for Tansen are generally higher than Kathmandu by about 5.5 per cent. The Agro Enterprise Centre does not appear to present the prices as Kalimati does, by retail and wholesale, and this misses out on the margins that are made at those two junctures of the value chain. It is well documented that the middle men tend to make the majority of the profit, however in Nepal it’s been a cause for concern that upwards of two middlemen can make a total of 30 per cent profit from the final retail price (Market Insider, 2013).

3.4.3 Urban-Rural Interface: A 2010 Article by Bhatta et al. discuss the urban-rural interface in terms of impacts of nearness to urban areas on small farms (Bhatta, et al, 2010). They contend that capital tends to increase the closer a farm is to an urban area due to increased road access, increased technology uptake, and family composition, all of which contribute to a scenario which improves farming practices (Bhatta et al, 2010). On the contrary, the FAO discusses various factors that hinder small farm productivity such as topography, whereby the Kathmandu valley and Pokhara are described as having rich sandy and alluvial soil (FAO, 1999), whereas Tansen is described as having sandy loam with a larger clay component and less access to water sources in many areas (Khatta et al., 2009).

3.5 Data sources and collection, methods

The sources of data come from purposively selecting farmers who are perceived as being more engaged in a commercial vegetable farm operation by selecting vegetable business farmers around three main urban regions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with mostly women farmers who were or
were intending to be more commercially focused in their vegetable business (69 interviews total, 58 women, 3 both man and woman, 8 men only). These interviews included both a qualitative and quantitative element, which allowed for comparison of the responses based on similar topics. The interviews took place in a range of situations: during training in Kathmandu at breaks or before or after sessions, on farm, at one central home or shop location. The nature of Nepali culture is that of trust and openness, and as such, neighbors or other participants would often be present during interviews for support or out of curiosity. Participants were given a small gift as well as had their photo taken and printed off (on the spot or at a later date) as thanks for their time and information. Because participants were geographically spread, it was not possible to hold a summary meeting at the close of the research process, but each NGO with whom they are affiliated with receive a summary report, which can then be shared with the participants and incorporated into programming.

Key informants such as NGO workers, government extension agents, micro-credit employees, as well as farmers not included in the interviews and restaurateurs to gain the end user input were also questioned with a semi-structured interview that drew on a bank of questions (14 interviews). The insight gained from the informants offered a broader picture than what the individual participants offered because most informants had exposure to a large number of clients through their work, or represented a different segment of the value chain. The third method was participant observation, which took the form of a field journal and blog from 8 weeks in Nepal, interviews with restaurateurs, farm and market
visits, and observations from attending training. Attempts were made to get
discussion groups going, however because there was not a central unifying NGO
supporting the study, logistically it simply wasn’t possible, and informal discussion
group attempts quickly fizzled. Secondary sources are also used for the literature
review, but moreover include market pricing from various government websites, as
well as vegetable related news articles in the popular media, which were used for a
critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is “another way of saying that
texts are instanciations of socially regulated discourses and that the processes of
production and reception are socially constrained,” in other words, newspaper as
text closely represents the larger discourse that exists on the ground in Nepali
agriculture, but recognizes that they are merely “versions of reality” (Janks,
1997:2,5). As an analyst, the researcher takes a particular stance and “aims to offer
a different "mode" or "perspective" of theorizing, analysis, and application” thus
allowing space to see where opinions are made and resisted in the aim of finding
and naming social justice issues (Van Dijk, 2001:352). This section is meant to
unpack patterns regarding what is said as well as speech presentation, or, the “ways
in which we present other’s speech” (Evans, 2013:3), in order to discuss the timely
information offered through popular media in Nepal (Janks, 1997).

3.5.1 Participant sampling

This research was originally to be conducted through one major Nepal based
NGO, however shortly before the field visit was to happen, the group was unable to
fulfill their obligation thus alternative methods of community entry were
established. I was able to connect with one Nepali NGO, Rangjung Yeshe Shenpen, through the Internet and made a significant connection with the Project Manager Anamika Aryal, who arranged field visits to individual farms and to training in Kathmandu. Another classmate in the SEDRD department connected me with two other international NGOs, Heifer International and Bird Nepal, both with projects based in the Pokhara and Tansen regions. Lastly the translator employed in the two western regions used her contacts to connect us with farmers associated with LI-BIRD and independent women’s groups as well. At some points rice harvest was on so the list of farmers provided revealed that many were not home, and were farther away harvesting their rice. At that time snowball sampling yielded several participants who were again, part of women’s groups and the local NGO that the original participants were part of. While the resultant group of farmers may seem disjointed, the reality of Nepal is that the number of NGOs currently operating (some estimates are around 50,000) creates a significant opportunity for farmers to join a development project or training. Farmers across the country are unified in their efforts to grow more and expand their business, but are being trained by a huge array of organizations with different approaches and capacities to deliver quality training. Some of this variance then is reflected in the farmers interviewed for this research.

Participants for the farmer interviews were selected using a purposive snowball sampling. For this study, it was imperative to seek out farmers who are more engaged in commercialized markets through their vegetable business, rather than focus on statistical representation of factors outside the importance to this
study. As Morse is quoted in Palys and Atchison’s *Research Decisions*, “the sample is determined according to the needs of the study, and not according to external criteria” (Morse, 1994:229). It looked specifically at famers who exhibit or express knowledge of entrepreneurism who were largely participating in some type of group training activity or NGO association.

### 3.5.2 Interview Translation Process

The assistants were given orientation on the nature of the study, as well as on the consent process, and issues of power before we entered the field. The process of translation was such that each question was thoroughly clarified before hand as well as the overall interest of the research, and the translator would ask questions in Nepali, then translate orally for the researcher, who would be responsible for taking notes, clarifying answers and probe for further information. The role of a translator cannot be under scored enough, as they are the primary instrument through which the information is collected by the researcher.

Both the translators and myself were new to the communities where we were conducting interviews so it was important that they provided not only translation of what the participants were saying, but also cultural translation. This allowed them to offer myself insight into Nepali culture, social cues and facilitating the respondents interpretation of myself and the research in a broader sense (Berman & Tyska 2011; Edwards, 1998). Theoretically, the translators are positioned through both a social constructivist and feminist perspectives (Edwards, 1998; Grossman, et al, 1999 until otherwise noted). Social constructivism sees the
interpreter as a key informant who is part of the process and who translates actively and mediates the message coming from a participant. My feminist approach is interested in reducing the power hierarchies between individuals and moving towards inclusivity during the research process. As such in the instance of this study, the interpreters were active agents making meaning of the translations for themselves, as well as for the participants and the researcher.

In order to become connected with market-oriented farmers, it was necessary for this study to be based around larger city centers that offer physical access to markets, better access to capital as well as technical information (Wiggins, et al, 2011). While the process of commercialization can take on many paths, these three variables contribute greatly to commercial success, regardless of farm size (CAADP Policy Brief, 2011). Three locations were chosen with each location having similar hilly terrain, but having a range of population: Kathmandu (population 1.74 million), Pokhara (264,991) and Tansen (29,095) (Nepal Housing Census, 2011). Each of these areas have reasonable road infrastructure, if not between regions then at least from nearby farms to the city centre itself. As compared to more hilly regions, the roads were mostly noted to be open year round by participants. Each region also has its own unique factors that make it conducive to helping nearby farmers, women in particular, move towards commercialization: rates of migrant labour, pricing of vegetables and proximity to urban areas, meaning farming within the rural-urban interface.
3.6 Data Analysis

Analysis was based on grounded theory in order to properly analyze the range of topics that go into exploring empowerment and women farmers’ lives by “organizing and reducing the data by gathering them into themes or essences” (Walker & Myrick, 2006:549). Qualitative descriptive analysis of observation and interviews with participants allowed for “working with unstructured data... that have not been coded at the point of collection” and furthermore will illuminate “the explicit interpretation and meanings of human functions” which in this case is the impact of participation of market oriented farming on a woman farmer’s sense of empowerment (Denzon & Lincoln, 2000). It also aimed at observing and describing the behavior of the participants without proving or disproving a hypothesis, but moreover by providing enough variables, which could inform a set of conclusions (Shuttleworth, 2008). This research methodology relies to some extent on ethnographic description, as the time present in the field allowed for being able to observe natural behaviors in natural contexts (McNabb, 2008).

Coding was done using cut and paste method, and the first round of coding of raw data was based on both open and some selective coding. According to Strauss and Corbin coding means that the researcher systematically analyzes codes to infer larger conclusions based on a process of making sure concepts are repeatedly found within the data (1990). This repetition according to Strauss and Corbin, ensures the minimization of researcher bias, such that those concepts are legitimately represented in the data and not just part of the researcher’s preoccupation with particular concepts. The themes were then organized into categories that
determined emergent clusters of ideas that were not apparent at the outset of the data and were the beginnings of the theory building that relates the experience of participants to the theoretical framework in this research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This level of axial coding resulted in the sub categories of the Findings section. Further axial coding and thematic analysis utilizing the theoretical framework, resulted in the conclusions outlined in the discussion. It was at this point that the main operative concept of a Professional Farmer emerged, which was a concept not identified through the literature review.

Some analysis occurred in the field, for example when saturation from a particular question was reached and new questions emerged that were previously unrealized. Probing questions were used to ensure saturation. A quick quantitative analysis was completed of tasks and gender roles, which led to comparisons between locales using the information in the checklist (from the farmer interviews), which was then presented in table form as well as written out. This information was used to investigate differences between those responses and the ones given in the qualitative responses as well as for comparison with the literature review. Validity was supported through triangulation of methods as well as inter-coder reliability. A fellow classmate reviewed the codes and discussed the themes that emerged, ensuring they measured what was set out in the research objectives, as well as to ensure each idea had supporting evidence found in the field. To minimize bias in the findings, presenting data through direct quotes in the findings section resulted in a rich description of the social lives of the farmers (Walker & Myrick, 2006).
3.6.1 Assumptions

Based on the researcher’s experience working with farmers in a developed and developing context, several assumptions were made. First an assumption was made that more commercial farmers would be located closer to large city centres. Further to this point, when approaching community contacts, that the notion of a ‘commercial farmer’ would be ubiquitous and part of the 21per cent of market oriented farmers mentioned in the introduction. The notion of ethnicity would not play a major influencing role in the ability of farmers to access resources, as most farmers in this study underwent some form of training, were considered middle income due to factors which limit very poor farmers from participating, and represent a variety of ethnic groups. Based on the current level of NGO interest in supporting vegetable projects that include women, it is assumed that the core interests of this research are timely and needed. Lastly and assumption is made that market engagement at the domestic level enhances indirect entitlement to food and other needs.

3.6.2 Study limitations

This study was not an outright comparison of an equal amount of men and women farmers. It originally aimed at having a larger portion of men participants, however at most farm visits the men simply were not around which is a reflection of how many men are working off farm. As such the analysis relied on what the men who were present said as well as by using the information gleaned from the literature. Furthermore, there is no homogenous group of any people, but moreover
of farmers who have a static amount of land, access or training. As mentioned previously, this group of farmers is representative of market-oriented farmers who have had training. Beyond that they represent the variety of people that exist in Nepal by representing different, caste, class and ethnic groups, as well as location, perceived income and so forth. Furthermore the size of the participant population in this study is able to offer generalization known by Malcom Williams to be in *moderatum*, where the “where aspects of [a phenomenon] can be seen to be instances of a broader recognizable set of features” (Williams, 2000:215). As Williams would argue, sampling is a key factor in a researcher’s ability to make larger inferences, because the sample “bears the characteristics” of the population affected by the research question (2000, 216). In this instance, women farmers were selected based on their relationship to the market, meaning, it was requested that the interviews happened with farmers who were market-oriented, or more commercialized. In this way each respondent was speaking from the perspective of the goal participants, or rather they “reflect the relevant characteristics of the wider group to which she wishes to generalize” (2000:216). This is significant to the nature of this study, because participants here are not part of a probability or quota sample, they were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, as business oriented farmers do not represent the majority of the population, but moreover represent farmers which “aren’t well defined or aren’t easy to find” (Palys & Atchison, 2014:115). As such, the generalizations here recognize that they are telling the story of participants that are part of this study, but could be seen supporting a larger narrative of women farmers in the commercialization process.
On the note of income, this information was anecdotally offered, however it seemed as though the dollar number represented ‘in season’ numbers which doesn’t represent months of off season income or times of bad crops. As such this study is unable to tell if farmers are working at high, medium or no profit levels and some inference or speculation was used to support the discussion on the impacts of market engagement on women. Furthermore farmers may be reluctant to share their personal income levels with the researcher.

This research also takes place in 13 villages surrounding three main city centres in Nepal being Kathmandu, Pokhara and Tansen. Nepal is an incredibly culturally and religiously diverse country, and often these differences are determined regionally. This study looks at a cross section of people who exist in Nepal, but once the data is viewed in aggregate, it perhaps fails to account for the cultural and regional nuances of each village and city where the research takes place. Some efforts were made to recognize this limitation, such as outlining the unique growing zone, levels of migrant labour, and pricing in the areas, but these three factors do not account for social and cultural aspects of farmer’s lives.

Furthermore, representation of the quantitative data of “Farm tasks by gender” was created to show who was doing what on the farm, but also show which areas have different trends.
3.7 Summary

In this chapter the detailed research plan was described and some of the key influencing factors were outlined in order to offer a closer look at the context in which the variety of participants exist. Migrant labour, regional pricing and the urban-rural interface vary from niche to niche, however when these considerations are factored in, key elements of market-oriented farmers’ experiences can still be utilized in *moderatum* in order to relate them to a larger population of similar types of farmers. In the next chapter the research Findings will be presented which are the result of several rounds of open coding based on grounded theory. The following chapter will move into the Findings by presenting the main findings from the data that was analyzed organized using open and selective coding.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the farmer interviews, key informant interviews and participant observation are described. They are separated into the main themes which begin with a macro view on the enabling environment as discussed by the participants including government, policy and the vegetable market itself. The findings then describe the respondent demographics of the 69 farmers who participated. Next is a discussion on why participants chose to participate in training, changes felt from the training, empowerment according to the respondents and then constraints to commercialization including the role of land and labor in expansion. Next is a detailed look at on farm roles by gender and region, then a discussion on pricing strategies and dealing with middlemen. Lastly this section describes the notion of entrepreneurialism and issues of social justice and the food system.

4.1 He said, she said: Agriculture and representation in popular news media

A fascinating part of Nepali culture is the close interpersonal tie the general public has to agriculture and the ease of access the researcher has to conversations on this topic. It was not difficult to approach restaurateurs, hotel owners, a homestay family, or a young yoga assistant, to engage in a meaningful dialogue on the topic of farming and economic development. In the context of a country with 70 per cent of its population being involved in agriculture this level of interest may seem natural, however what makes this closeness to primary agriculture even more
interesting is the amount of coverage agriculture receives in the popular media such as the national newspapers, of which there are many. Furthermore the Ministry of Agricultural Development in Nepal includes a listing of ‘research’, in its website which are mostly these very news articles that are updated almost daily. As Professor Ian Spears from the University of Guelph would argue, newspapers employ a large amount of people on the ground, reporting in very remote areas and are able to post articles online that offer continual and timely access to information (Spears, 2015). He would further support reading even those articles which espouse reporting bias, because that bias is simply a representation of what someone thinks and how they see the world (Spears, 2015). These articles then are a very timely representation of the standard narrative in Nepalese agriculture, particularly in the vegetable subsector. As such, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of 31 news articles was conducted to investigate who was saying what about vegetable farming, and who has a voice in representing the interests of vegetable farmers. The articles are dated between January 2014 to March 2015 and chosen based on their coverage of the subject matter of ‘vegetables’ broadly. A good entry point for assessing patterns within the 20 articles is to examine the word cloud made up of their entire text:
In order of most frequent occurrence, the ten most repeated words are: rupees (Rs) (123), kilogram (kg) (77), vegetables (75), Nepal (50), pesticides (43), farmers (42), market (41), production (41), country (35), prices (34). Words related to this study that were mentioned only once each were: commercialized, competitive, cooperative, entrepreneurship, business, or women (‘men’, ‘male’ and ‘female’ were not mentioned at all).
As the newspaper is one medium through which the agricultural discourse emerges, we can infer then that there is a widespread preoccupation with the amounts of vegetable produce produced (hence all the numbers in the word cloud which align with ‘Rs’, rupees) and amount of rupees made. Within the text, the most frequent reporting is on the massive fluctuations in retail pricing within the vegetable market. While this information is readily available online or via text from some vegetable marketing agencies, there is a certain predilection for reporting on these fluctuations in both the Nepali and English news versions of the paper almost daily, and furthermore in great detail. There is also a smaller representation of reporting on traders fixing prices in their own favour whereby the farmer wholesale price is suppressed and the retail price is not. The frequency of price fluctuation reporting, as well as its in depth nature, might support the reader in making assumptions about the ‘naturalness’ of the prices, however a more critical view indicates that the price fluctuation frenzy supports and perhaps distracts from a larger structural issue being price fixing.

The issue of improper use of pesticides arose out of the critical reading of the news articles related to vegetables. The Government of Nepal recently acknowledged that pesticide use is alarmingly high in many areas and has resulted in alarmingly high levels of pesticides in major markets such as the Kalimati market in Kathmandu (Prasain, 2014). This research acknowledges that pesticide use in vegetables is widespread and often they are used to impacts on human and environmental health, but due to the nature of this particular project, while a full discussion is warranted, at present it is out of scope to offer a full critical analysis of
this issue in the news media. Thus after prices and volumes of vegetables, the next most frequent discussions are of investments and development of agriculture, which impact the overall development of Nepal (represented in the word count by the frequency of ‘Nepal’ and ‘country’). Along with Nepal and country, ‘Development’ was mentioned 30 times throughout the text and was often mentioned in relation to remittances and the lack of using remittance money to help with national development. Of this, one article states:

Remittances have driven up tax revenue to the point where the government has operated at a surplus despite lagging behind in the basic infrastructure developments - such as roads and electricity - that would encourage investment in Nepal in the first place (Kaina, 2014).

In a similar line of thinking, another critical viewpoint states, “no country has ever succeeded in sustaining growth and job creation on remittance alone” (Knight, 2014). When agricultural development is discussed in these articles, it is mainly based on the large influx of remittance money, and on the idea of agriculture economic advances such as district-led investments or large grants that different agricultural sectors have received. Generally the conclusions related to this topic often links nationwide investments with the development of the agriculture sector, but fails to bring it down to the level of the individual. Development according this set of articles happens at the country level, and despite individuals owning ‘land’ (mentioned 21 times), or bringing in the ‘money’ (mentioned 20 times), poverty and livelihoods were mentioned merely 2 times.

Honing in further on this micro level view, ‘farmers’ is mentioned 42 times throughout the twenty articles and generally they are a passive and homogenous
group. At times farmers are named, but not quoted for example “Yagya Prasad Subedi, a pioneer banana farmer in the district…” or are lumped into a homogenous group (only divided in one instance by farm status being commercial, subsistence and landless): “more than 1,800 farmers in the district are involved in seed production” (Hamal, 2013:1). When farmers are quoted, it is most often men farmers mentioned in relation markets or pesticide problems and women farmers are named in relation to a specific instances of women’s development such as a women’s cooperative or a development project that made access to markets or resources easier, such as the new wholesale market in Pokhara. A larger proportion of farmers are women and so having more women associated with development projects makes sense, as many development organizations target women as they are a marginalized group. In this instance, however, it would appear that news media coverage highlights women’s involvement with development projects and actively omits men from this part of the association. Furthermore, traders and middlemen are often quoted as discussing prices and flow of goods as well as predicting where prices will be going. As the earlier value chain discussion established, traders are more often men, thus in terms of this vegetables in the media critique, non-farming men are therefore represented as being most closely related to controlling the flow of goods and commerce.

To summarize, the value of doing ongoing critical discourse analysis is that it has the ability to uncover hidden power relations, which are maintained when popular media covers a particular topic in depth. This analysis has revealed and discussed three main themes: the active interest in pricing and volumes of
vegetables produced by the Nepali news media, and an ongoing narrative that puts influencing individuals in positions of power at the forefront of the agricultural market and development discussion. Lastly it discussed the roles women and men farmers play in the agricultural scene. This tends to leave farmers most often represented by collective nouns, or as named men farmers who are most often quoted directly when discussing farming problems unrelated to price, and as named women who are partaking in development projects. A critical analysis of these representations reveals that both men and women are underrepresented in popular news media not only in terms of representing their own interests such as pricing of vegetables but also in terms of demonstrating a voice of their own. Women farmers moreover are less represented than men.

4.2 Atmosphere and Government

The government workers encountered in this study were relatively uninspired in their work. One government informant said he neither looks for new information on the internet, nor does he try and find new ways of doing things. He says this is because they are still in the same policy framework from 35 years ago and so few changes have been observed in the industry over this timeframe. Informants also discussed a lack of risk mitigation programs such as minimum pricing on vegetables, which would help farmers ensure they cover their costs of production. That being said there is a country-wide level renewed interest in agriculture as being directly able to get the economy reinvigorated despite some informants saying that the policies being developed are ‘agriculture’ centered but
not ‘farmer’ centered, as they should be. A recent amendment was made to policy that governs the inflow of remittance money, and this new amendment has made it easier to do so. While policy is also being changed to encourage women to own their own land to use as collateral for farm investments, on the ground women are widely unaware of how to take advantage of this program, causing the actual implementation to be rather challenged.

The notion of an economic approach to development in Nepal is a contested statement, as the development oriented minds in this study said there is a move away from traditional economic focused development in the country to a more practical approach. There were indications that farmers are willing to change their cropping systems, whether it is the crops they grow or the technology needed to grow better, and differently. The prevalence of NGO intervention nationally, as with the group of people interviewed for this study, has shown that farmers are taking advantage when new technologies become available. Around 50,000 NGOs have taken root in Nepal over the last 25 years, and many informants discussed the role NGOs had in their ability to access training as well as government extension workers. In this way the NGO can be seen as a direct line between the government and the farmers.

An end user of vegetables stated that it is incredibly difficult to form groups to become more active to form a buyers group or raise awareness about pricing issues, because of the current political instability. This informant said since the insurgency quelled and the peace accord was signed, people are not as able to form groups lest they be seen as stirring the pot. In the major cities the army would
often be seen carrying large automatic assault weapons. Sniper bird’s nests surround training camps that are located within the city limits, and this was especially so in light of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting that was happening during the middle of this research period. As an outside observer, I was acutely aware of the heavy army and police presence not only during the time of this meeting, but in major cities throughout the period of research.

4.2.1 Variance in local vegetable markets

The local vegetable market was described as being nearly unending with farmers rarely saying they couldn’t sell what they produced. The markets in the three regions (Kathmandu, Pokhara and Tansen) had different influencing factors, for example in Tansen there were more collection centres for collective marketing to combat competition from nearby Butwal. Kathmandu has the largest fruit and vegetable trading centre in the country and also access to a large population which meant farmers generally received higher prices overall, but in turn the middlemen or traders also got better prices for themselves. Many restaurants in that area also found that imports from India were cheaper and to support an ‘all local’ menu was nearly impossible to achieve competitively. Pokhara was an area where farmers discussed new crop opportunities such as broccoli, which were not historically part of the Nepali diet, but something like strawberries needed to be sourced from Kathmandu and brought in by bus as no local was currently producing them despite tourist demand for the crop.
The topic of organics came up continually during interviews and this is largely because of recent discoveries that there were high pesticide loads in many vegetable crops grown in Nepal. Several news exposés have positioned non-organic foods as ‘scary’, and the Kathmandu government has stated their intention to have the valley pesticide free by 2025. Farmers express an interest in growing organic, yet feel it is too challenging because of the temperate climate in which they grow being conducive to pests and disease. It was also said that those who do grow organically are not able to capture higher value from the market for this product. The government extension workers described growing organics as very difficult to do successfully, especially in the agro climactic zone the farmers were in.

4.3 Respondent characteristics

4.3.1 Respondent location and group affiliation

Three main regions were chosen in which to conduct field-based interviews: Tansen, Pokhara and the Kathmandu Valley area. A total of 69 farmer interviews were conducted with eleven taking place in Tansen, 12 in Pokhara, and the remaining 46 taking place all around the Kathmandu Valley. All respondents were part of a group or were working with an NGO or non-profit in a training capacity. Of the 69 total interviews, three interviews were conducted with husband and wife present, eight were men-only respondents and the remaining 58 were women-only respondents. The median age of respondents is 40 years with the oldest being 65 and the youngest being 18 years old. Six respondents were single or widowed, and the remainder was married. Most farmers were involved in a cooperative: 58
respondents (84 per cent) said yes they are part of a microfinance coop (46), marketing (8), seed (1), or tomato tunnel coop (1). Pertaining to literacy, forty-six respondents said they were literate with some education, three said they were semi-literate and the remaining 18 said they were illiterate.

4.3.2 Household features

The average household size was five with the largest being a combined family of over ten people and the smallest being two people. 55 per cent of households had only 2 generations living in the home and 45 per cent had three generations. Table 4.1 shows the breakdown of who is head of the household:

![Table 4.2 Head of household n = 69](chart.png)

Respondents had an average of 2.2 children, with the split being around 1.2 sons and 1 daughter. Eight respondents had no children.
4.3.3 Off-farm employment or income

Respondents largely did not have an off farm job themselves and only 16 per cent of respondents stated they do have off farm income in the form of a pension (1), construction labour (n=1), tailor shop (1), vegetable shop (1), special NGO project position (1), and an agrovet or shop (6). In some cases respondents receive money from family who are working outside Nepal or just outside the community. For the respondents who stated yes, family members are outside the community sending money, 36 of 69 respondents affirmed that family members send money to help them. This question was positioned as ‘abroad’ being either in another geographical location locally or out of the country. An additional 8 family members were recorded as being abroad generally, with only one respondent stating her husband is abroad but she doesn’t need his money. The remaining 25 family members accounted for are engaged in jobs such as army positions, police force, shops, hotels, driving, using a government pension, teaching or being a tour guide within Nepal.

For the 36 respondents who stated yes, a family member gives me money, a total of 46 members are supporting them at their household.

The respondents who are not receiving financial support from the family total 33 of 69 total respondents. Not all would have the opportunity to have money sent, so responding ‘no’ could mean that there is not opportunity (for example, their children are too young to work). The reasons stated for money not being sent by family members include: they no longer need the financial support (1), the husband works in the army but she makes her own money (2), their past career was successful and now they run the farm as a business (2), the past career abroad was
unsuccessful so now they returned home to farm (1), the member took ill and returned home (1), members are abroad but do not send money (2) and the majority of respondents who gave reasons said both husband and wife successfully run the farm with 7 respondents answering as such.

4.4 Motivations for training

All farmers interviewed in Tansen and Kathmandu areas were affiliated with an NGO active in the area (n=57), and 8 of 12 farmers in the Pokhara area were directly working with an NGO in a project capacity, but the remainder were part of a group. The women organized into their informal women’s group described how they would approach extension workers for training, however their responses as to whether they had received training for their farm business were not explicit, thus leaving them out of the ‘received training’ pool in this study. As such, it is reasonable to assume that farmers with reasonable access to training totals 61 or 88 per cent of respondents, however for various reasons only 58 of respondents received some form of business or agriculture production training.

The available training was described as being restricted to what can be accomplished within a timeframe or a budget. In some cases, women expressed wanting to have training other than just vegetables such as hair styling or esthetics but their associated organization said it takes too long so the programs that offer that type of training was not an option. Women can become more proficient at vegetable farming in four days so that’s what is offered. Many women were new to training or being in a classroom as it was said that men tend to monopolize the
training opportunities. It is thought that men usually enter the business cycle when money is to be handled such as after harvest or going to market with the product and women are then given money for groceries or basic household necessities. Lower income women are also unable to partake in training because of the time required to attend. It simply costs them too much income to attend for the 4 or 5-day period.

Of those who did training, they were asked why they decided to do training in the first place, here described in order of significance to based on the number of responses. Seeing their neighbors doing vegetable farming was an influence for many farmers, especially when they saw the skills and profits of the neighbours increase. Of this one female respondent said “I took the training because I wanted to nurture my potential.” Staff from local organizations actively recruit in the field to get farmers, especially women, to participate in training. Other motivations to take training were: to expand the acreage or increase production; to send their children to school; to learn about a new way of generating income, start saving, or diversify to higher value crops; learning on behalf of the older uneducated generation; to learn about new technologies and new techniques to manage pests and disease; to not only benefit themselves but to teach others in the household; and lastly one woman said she took the training because it was offered for free. This is also the first time the participants mention or describe the notion of “Professional Farming” which is to say, someone who practices farming in a modern fashion, leaving behind the ‘traditional knowledge’ of the previous generation by taking a significant amount or type of training. Professional farming appears to be a point of pride for
many respondents, and it is a title that holds social gravitas in the communities I spoke to.

Participants described a Professional Farmer as being highly organized and having the ability to take and fill orders, as well as pre-book crops on a continual basis. They are educated in many specialized topics such as integrated pest management, pesticide use and safety, climate change adaptation, precision agriculture, record keeping and more. They also farm ‘with intention’, which involves maximizing growth on a limited land base, and having a plan for the future, as well as helping others in the community improve their practices. They are able to employ labour outside of the family, which helps the local economy, but this change as well as increased technology can also increase the cost of production. In this study four men respondents identified as Professional Farmers, and 5 women identified as Professional Farmers. None of the farmers from Kathmandu identified as Professional Farmers. The training required for achieving professional status appears to be longer than short-term training sessions. Of this one Professional Farmer said “There is no end to learning.”

For several women who did not participate in training, they felt that being part of a group was sufficient for them to learn new things. Several men respondents cited an exit from a past career (at home or abroad) as motivation to start farming and take up training. The attitude of these respondents was that they are still far behind where they should be technologically and thus more training is still needed to maximize productivity on their farms.
4.4.1 Changes experienced from training

Respondents were asked what changes they have seen since completing training. The primary change given were as follows:

Figure 4.3 Main change experienced from training

*Single attribute: One or more of skills, knowledge, access, or confidence offered in single word responses.

**Advanced farming skills: distinguished from Professional Farmer by further description or use of ‘professional farming’ as a term.

Some women described their personal leadership specifically, as one female respondent says: “I have been used as an example for other women and I showcase my skills at trainings for other women.” Professional Farmers were able to articulate the experience of transition away from traditional farming as one respondent did here: “I felt like before the training I had blinders on, but once I learned what Professional Farming is all about I felt like I needed to learn more.”

Some respondents described being left behind, especially when discussing technology. Of this one woman said “I saw that technology was always changing so I really felt I needed to learn new things to keep up.” Many farmers discussed
becoming more independent and being able to take charge of their farm, as one man said “If you apply what you have learned, then change happens.” From one woman’s perspective, she was trying to take on a more dominant role in her family. Of this she said “I want to make my own decisions, so I will try to convince my mother and father in law to try things differently, and if they don’t listen to me I’ll probably just do what I want.” Professional farming elicited a prideful response, and some respondents specifically said they are not yet professionals. Of this one woman said “Once I started professional farming I became identified by my community as a professional.” Generally the men were able to articulate their situation more clearly and with greater detail. Generally every respondent had something positive to say about training, while only one respondent said she doesn’t feel more confident in her abilities after training.

4.4.2 Social change

Not only does training offer an increase in technical capacities, but most respondents cited a transformative change in their self-esteem or sense of leadership within their community. This change iterated itself in the form of ability to speak in front of a crowd, having neighbours look to them for advice, feeling responsible or feeling like a leader in their village, and most significantly, a better more equal working relationship with the head of household. One woman described a change in the relationship she had with her husband by stating “Training has been a big benefit, I am able to make decisions by myself and I feel like an equal to my husband.” Twelve respondents cited such changes. Of this one woman said
specifically “Before the training we felt dominated by society and now that we are earning more money and are entrepreneurial we have more confidence.” Some families sent the younger generation to training in order to benefit the family. Of this one woman said “I can make more decisions now, my father in law was interested in having me attend the training so he will respect what I learn.” Five of the 58 respondents said they felt no major change, or had yet to see change in their life, and one spoke about how difficult it was to complete the training due to illiteracy and lack of primary education.

When given the opportunity to talk about anything else, respondents very easily self identified other problems that were more acutely felt than those covered by the interview. Some other issues they discussed related to off seasonal management, or management in drought or other climate change scenarios. Some mentioned that crop disease management was a challenge, and several cited that new seed technology really interested them but they don’t have access or knowledge about this technology. Similarly, some learned about new technology, but lack the equipment necessary to try out the new techniques thus leaving them no better off than before. A couple of respondents seemed unsure about how they run their business, or cited that they merely “break even” over the course of a year. As with the “occupation” question, women said they also work around the house as their secondary occupation. Reluctance to discuss personal financial issues could be based on a privacy concern on the part of participants.
4.5 Empowerment according to the respondents

Several key informants stated that training is meant to level the playing field between men and women, as women historically have not had access to formal learning opportunities. The empowerment process was described as helping men and women work together in harmony and that the cooperative model allows for harmonious relationship. They also said that an empowered woman is curious and has the ability to ask questions and act on the new knowledge. She is doing well in her business.

The Women’s Cooperative Society (WCS), of which many interview respondents were members, had dual views on empowerment of women. To them the training process helps them becomes more empowered in their lives, and this happens in various ways. When asked about a definition for women’s empowerment, WCS offered that the 12 Promises developed by the organization is their ideal view of an empowered woman. Table 4.2 shows the promises women make before their small group meetings:

Table 4.2 Women’s Cooperative Society 12 Promises

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I will regularly save money and will not spend on things that are not needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Because I am earning my own income I am participating in something that offers economic development for all in the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>With the help and coordination of the group and the centres, I am helping support welfare for all involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I will spread the spirit of the cooperative with each member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>When I take out a loan I promise to pay it back regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I will operate truthfully and promise to do what I say without lying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I promise to clean my house, my yard and my children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Without discrimination I will send both my sons and daughters to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I will not be an alcoholic and will not consume alcohol or smoke drugs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I will not bear injustice, and I will not tolerate injustice against others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I have a commitment to family planning-- a small family is a happy family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I will work hard to make the future bright for my family and me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked again later in the key informant interview, the respondent described how he can see that during the training process, a woman’s lifestyle improves, she starts to exhibit leadership qualities and eventually she comes to meetings even though she lets on there is no need for her to do so. She speaks for herself, and makes her opinion known, she lacks the neediness that she once had at the beginning of training. This perceived neediness was observed in Pokhara, with the informal group of hill women who were so overtly desperate for training, and of the inner city farmers who were quite outspoken about how they didn’t need much more training as their women’s group provided a lot of answers to their problems as well as access to extension workers.

Further to this, the informants indicated that patriarchy is a social problem that puts up a huge barrier to women. To get around this, women need to become less dependent on their husbands by gaining economic independence, by speaking for themselves and becoming leaders through group activities. Informants felt that training programs in agriculture that give women these opportunities are helping with their empowerment. Of this opportunity, one woman farmer shared that
“Nepal is an agricultural country and so farming is a good opportunity for women. Women are more discriminated in the business world so there are less opportunities for them.”

According to farmer respondents, women’s empowerment is a balance of women being able to problem solve on their own as well as have family support to do what she needs. It is the ability to act on plans based on new knowledge, but the opposite is true, disempowerment, when they are too busy, they lose interest or the family doesn’t allow them to use the new skills they learned at training. When women have received training the decision-making power shifts to their domain of responsibility. In several cases women farmers said they make more decisions because they are more educated or literate than their husbands, but illiteracy is the main reason women stated they feel unqualified to do the business portion of farming. After training, women often identified that they no longer seek out permission to do things around the farm, they handle more marketing responsibility, and they have more control, whereas, they say, untrained women are more dominated by men. Many women were confident that they can handle the household expenses without the help of their husbands.

Empowerment is also linked with owning their own land, which increases their confidence, and being equal partners in the relationship and business. When women are more part of the business they feel more confident. Women were very aware of their double day of responsibilities as evidenced through their self identified occupations often being “full time farmers and homeworkers”. In one small village outside Pokhara, one man was a village leader and was thoroughly
trained as a Professional Farmer however didn’t feel entitled to train others, so the training stayed with him. In Tansen another man was trained as a professional and did try and teach his neighbours, despite some petty backlash. When asked how men react to women taking over more of ‘their’ roles, it was said generally that they are comfortable with women taking over the marketing, and many people talked of how women now ‘have something to do’ while the men are away working. WCS also has women present to each other when they are too advanced for the class. At one point during an interview a mushroom farmer asked about more advanced training but the director said she was too advanced for what they had available so she should just teach others instead.

It was said that male migration increases women’s vulnerability if the women are entirely dependent on the men’s incomes. Women are seen leaving the farm to go live in the city, where they are not able to be self-sustaining in either food production or independent income because of the gender bias from many employers. They move because they do not have the skills to farm the land on their own and are able to live off of the remittance money sent home. In the Kathmandu area there was more outmigration among respondents, but in the Tansen area more men and women work together on the farms. Some men in this area are returning to work on the farm with their partner.

4.6 Constraints to Commercialization

This study intended to look at more commercialized farms, however it was discovered that since less than 1 per cent of farmers in Nepal have commercialized
farms, the farms in this study are part of a segment of 21 per cent of farms which are market oriented, as opposed to the remaining 88 per cent of farms which are subsistence (Samriddhi Prosperity Foundation, 2001). Market oriented farms both consume their own goods and sell them in the market. Respondents identified constraints they faced to achieving commercialization or further expansion of their business.

The women and men in this study could easily identify the barriers to their own success, which often fell in line with barriers to becoming commercialized mentioned in the literature. One man summarized what was holding his smallholder neighbors back: “The three main restrictions for neighboring smallholders is one, capital investment two, if they have the money they don’t invest it into the farm, they spend it on other things, and three, they lack the manpower to do what they are doing.” Farmers acutely felt the lack of access to credit, and in some cases ownership of the size of land needed to serve the market. One informant felt that about 20-25 per cent of women farmers could sell direct to the larger market (continually) for higher prices, while the rest sold locally with some ability to sell into the large city market if time and transport allowed. Farmers also said that a lack of reliable transport was often a reason they couldn’t get goods to market without the use of a middleman, and taking it themselves simply takes too much time. Furthermore they find it easier to deal with one buyer as opposed to many at a larger market, or to deliver straight to individual restaurants for example. The outmigration of men was cited as a reason for lack of on farm skills in diversifying or problem solving which was a main reason for many women to join
some form of farming training. Some women stated they felt quite alone as their husband worked outside of the village. Others stated their husbands were too lazy to do farm work with them. Many women with absent husbands said they make all the decisions. Many women recognized that a lack of formal “Professional Farmer” training was a limitation on their business skills. Not doing this sort of training leads to an inability to keep records, or use pesticides safely for themselves and on what they produce. Some also found growing vegetables, while profitable was quite challenging as a woman farmer said, “Maize is easier to sell because you can store it as long as you want, whereas vegetables become damaged.” A good opportunity for women was said to be cultivating tomatoes or mushrooms, despite their high perishability, there is high demand in both local and city based markets. These crops are skills intensive however, especially in the case of mushrooms. Many women were keenly interested in expanding by using tomato tunnels however their cost and lack of skills were prohibitive in this happening.

Many farmers stated that they had no idea what the yield potential was for a given crop, they simply grow as much as possible and sell as much as possible. When asked how they estimate what their income will be, respondents said if the weather is good they know they will make money. Respondents were asked if they made any farm investments in the last year with the intention that ‘investment’ meant some lasting infrastructure change to the farm such as a new tomato greenhouse. Of the group, 21 of 69 said yes, they made some investment in tunnels, equipment, irrigation, mushroom huts, or livestock. Of the remainder, 19 took out microloans for inputs such as labour, seed, fertilizer, fodder, or lunch for labour.
Anecdotally it was said that farmers, large and small, often borrowed to expand their business often through higher quality inputs to try and earn more from what they have.

Women often said they don’t go to the bank because their names aren’t on the land deed thus they are ineligible for loans, or they aren’t educated enough to deal with bankers. Loans through the Women’s Cooperative Society also create a way for women to access resources they otherwise have no access to, due to lack of collateral however in this study only around 30 per cent of respondents made infrastructure loans and the remaining 30 per cent who took out a loan used it on operating costs for the farm. Of those who have a savings account, the idea of holding an account elicited quite a proud response. Around 30 per cent of respondents overtly said they have savings accounts.

One respondent said there are minimum thresholds for how many livestock it takes to be considered a business farmer: 5 cows, 10 goats, or 200 chickens, which in turn means you need at least 5 ruponis (5/31 of a hectare) to support that many livestock. Furthermore, some farmers identified that they are still only able to compete in local markets and aren’t able to compete in international markets because of many of the limiting factors such as land size and quality. Overall they were described as moving from low-tech farming to using more modern farming techniques.
4.6.1 Land and Labor as Limits to Expansion

Nepal is a relatively small landmass considering its rapidly expanding population and vast tracts of hilly land, which are unsuitable for commercial vegetable farming. Despite huge potential production capacity from the land, farmers said they are unable to maximize production because of a lack of good quality, affordable inputs, lack of good quality training or timely extension services, lack of equipment to implement techniques learned, and low or decreasing quality of land. Farmers were asked how much land they own or rent, and whether or not it was adequate to meet their needs. Ten respondents both own and rent land, 8 only rent land and 51 own all the land they use to farm. The average farm size was 5.1 ruponi with the average owned area being 4.8 ruponi and the average rent area being .8 ruponi. The largest owned area was 31 ruponi (about 1 hectare) and the largest rent area was 15 ruponi.

Figure 4.4 Land mass size of participants versus census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land size according to study</th>
<th>Government Census of land size in hills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than .5 ha</td>
<td>Less than .5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5 - 2 ha</td>
<td>0.5 - 2 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 2 ha</td>
<td>more than 2 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

91% 9% 0%

46% 4% 50%

---

1 Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012
2 Women also recognized that they have dual occupations, being farming and home worker, which in this context adds to physical workloads as well as use of time.
Compared to the most recent census data, Figure 4.3 shows that these farms were smaller than the average, with no farms being larger than 2 hectares.

When asked if this land was adequate 31 said yes, 7 said yes and no (which was usually “no but I would like to there’s just none available”, or some other limiting factor), and 38 respondents said no, it’s not adequate for our needs. Reasons cited for not buying more land include land is available but: I don’t have access to more labour, available land is dry, land is too far away, its not available but I do rent more instead of buying. The most aggressive farmer was interested in getting 25-30 more ruponi to aggressively expand his vegetable enterprise. After some training programs it was recognized that women purchase their own land because of the increased income as well as recognition that owning land helps them use it as collateral. In other areas of the study some women are doing the same but not many. According to several sources, women own about 10 per cent of the land titles.

One respondent was sure that co-ownership was the best way forward however despite all this rhetoric from key informants, other than women saying they can’t borrow from a bank, women farmers themselves rarely talked about wanting to own the land, or accumulate land for their own empowerment.

Labor is another big issue for small farmers, which relates to youth and male outmigration. The three regions had varying degrees of male and youth outmigration, with Tansen farmers citing youth outmigration being quite significant, and thus men and women were mostly left behind to farm together. Many others cited the tarai as having large outmigration, despite the Kathmandu valley area seeing around 20 per cent of men leaving for ventures abroad. In the reverse trend,
the fluid border of Nepal and India means that many Indian migrant laborers are moving in and taking up place on the farms as hired labour. This would be mostly men, and in areas where Indian labour is not available such as in Pokhara, or Tansen, they employ local women who are likely landless laborers. The story of women taking over the farm is increasingly heard. Furthermore, farmers were asked if they received help from their neighbours. Generally neighbours will help each other in need or in high season, however for labour purposes, only a few respondents said they swap labour, while the rest said they pay each other for labour. One key informant spoke of labour swapping being quite common, however the quantitative interviews indicated that not as many farmers swap labour as indicated. It was about a 50 per cent divide as to whether people help each other, and, it is clear that labor swapping is the minimal amount of the respondents, while most of what is considered ‘helping’ is emergency help or simply sharing information. Of this, one woman respondent said clearly "If I am in trouble my neighbours help, otherwise no labor is exchanged." Information is usually about new techniques, where to get good seeds, plant diseases, problem solving or prices. Mushroom farmers explicitly said their farms are too much labour for people to help them. Of this one female farmer said “My neighbours do not help, the labor cost for mushrooms is too high and continual so we need to pay for this.” Overall labour was described as a reason for limiting expansion and farmers in this study spend too much time working on their own farms to be able to help their neighbours without remuneration.
4.7 Farm business tasks by gender

The vast majority of respondents said “no” when asked if there were things they couldn’t do because they are a man or woman. Of those few who did respond otherwise, they would state that men and women do chores equally and are friendly about how they do it. Women are able to build tunnels when they learn how. Women were historically discouraged from doing the plowing but even that is changing in most of the areas where this research took place. Of this one man said “No, but if its too difficult like plowing or lifting heavy things then the women shouldn’t do that.” Three respondents agreed and said women should not plow because it is too physically demanding. When questioned how they choose who is in charge of what tasks, respondents often said the most experienced person does the job especially for critical work such as planting and harvesting. One man described this idea as such: “If you have the knowledge then you are not discouraged from doing anything.” When asked “are you discouraged from doing certain things” some farmers discussed things which are challenging to them generally (which could have been a translation problem by asking “when do you feel discouraged?”). They named finding good seed, crop failure, not covering costs, or sometimes the crop doesn’t turn out and it is hard to tell why as the main problem. The question was also positioned to clarify if there are things that are difficult to do because they are a man or woman. The women in the study largely answered “no”, which summarizes the previous quote and division of labour that indicates, these farmers largely
delegate tasks based on skills and knowledge. One woman said “I am confident I can do anything and everything,” which mimicked the sentiments of many respondents.

A more quantitative account of roles on the farm was taken through the farmer questionnaire. Farmers were asked to answer task by task and noting by gender, who does what. Figure 4.4.1 is an aggregate of all areas of farm task:

Figure 4.4.1 Tasks completed by sex - All areas (n=69)

Figure 4.4.1 (above) shows that the general trend is women are doing more tasks overall on the farm, with the exception of plowing, making financial decisions and going to the bank for savings. While every respondent answered every question, total responses show that some respondents did not actually do that task.

Recordkeeping being of prime importance to commercialization, was the least
completed task, and respondents were explicitly asked if they do recordkeeping, while for other tasks such as grading, it was less clear that they actually did it. In the case of going to the bank for activities, in some cases this is an irrelevant activity because the women are unable to go by themselves as their husband is away, or as in the case of many WCS members, they are able to use the cooperative for loans. The line indicating when ‘both’ genders contribute to tasks is relatively flat, indicating that men and women work together in an equal manner. In the case of the women and men lines, the general trend is that women do more towards the beginning half of the diagram which involves more physical labour, and men are slightly more involved towards the latter half which represents business oriented activities. What this chart does not represent is time allocated to activities, or other activities that contribute to income or household tasks of importance to the running of the family, but not counted towards generating income.

The following three tables add up to the total number of respondents, and represent what percentage of responses indicated that men, women or both execute tasks.
Figure 4.4.2 shows that women in the Tansen area are doing less tasks on their own overall, and have the least amount of women getting loans by themselves but only by slightly less than those women in Pokhara. In Pokhara there are more women completing labor-intensive tasks and generally doing less of the business oriented tasks as the line trends downwards at the beginning of the business tasks. In Pokhara the highest proportion of women overall receive payments and complete the weeding on their own with 68 per cent and 75 per cent respectively of respondents indicating that women executed that task. Otherwise, women in Kathmandu are less consistent with the trends that Pokhara women follow, other than a large proportion of women collecting payments, managing sales and negotiating prices. More women in Kathmandu go to the bank to get loans, however as most women in that area were part of a borrowing cooperative, it is reasonable to
assume they mean go to the cooperative to get a loan. Figure 4.4.3 (above) shows that more men and women are doing tasks together overall. The general trend is that less instances of both genders doing plowing, going to the bank for loans, and receiving payments occur. Otherwise, this shows that in all areas similar percentage of respondents say that both receive payments and both make financial decisions together.
Figure 4.4.4 (above) shows that men are doing the least amount of tasks alone with the exception of plowing, going to the bank for savings and in the case of Tansen, receiving payments. Outside of those three tasks, around 30 per cent or less instances of men doing tasks alone was recorded.

4.8 Strategies for higher prices

Farmers use a variety of means to learn about the daily market prices, and with this information they use different strategies to try and capture better prices. Those Kathmandu farmers who are closer to the Kalimati market are able to visit almost daily, or send a family member, and learn firsthand prices that don’t involve a trader. Farmers often said they share this information freely with their neighbors.
There is a split between respondents who either seek out information from sources other than the trader or retailer, and those who take the trader's word for the price of the day. Some respondents recognized that they may not be getting ‘true market value’, as one woman said “We talk to the wholesaler and have to trust that he gives us the accurate answer. We could ask more questions but probably that information wouldn’t be correct.” One woman felt that the market was uncontrolled by anyone, as she stated, “The prices are not determined by anyone, retailers know the prices so I just sell for what they tell me to.” Another woman describes a process that does not involve negotiation by saying, “The retailer determines the price and comes to get the produce.” And yet another woman overtly said she is not able to negotiate and so she sells locally so she isn’t dependent on the system, by stating “I’m not sure what the prices really are because I am not able to negotiate, so I sell locally to shopkeepers.”

SMS text and radio play a large role in price information for many farmers in the Kathmandu area. Of this, one respondent said, “We call the toll free number frequently for the Kalimati marketing board and because of this we receive 20-30 rupee more every time we make a sale.” One farmer talked about forward contracting and also using their son to negotiate prices for them, as he works in the city daily, and another said she tracked the prices throughout the day: “We often go to the market to know what the prices are, in the morning the prices are different from the end of the day so we know what we can get that day.”

Collection centres and group marketing is the main way farmers successfully achieved more fair prices for their produce. The farmers who said they are part of a
marketing coop said they still use the other methods such as radio, television, text, or asking neighbours and retailers, however they have the added option to sell large orders to traders. In some areas they used a cooperative collection model which farmers pay 1 rupee per kilogram for processing to be a part of it. One man explained how it works at length:

To determine the price we listen to the market. We have a local committee with the cooperative that researches what price should be set by using retailer contacts, it is easier if the retailer comes to get the produce but they work both ways with shipping. If the farmers don't agree with or believe the price, they have the retailer's numbers available to do their own investigating of prices. Farmers have the choice who to sell to, the coop or the retailer. Often the farmers hear the retail prices but they are unaware of the wholesale price which is where the confusion comes from. They need to use the wholesale price to determine demand.

Two farmers noted that they learn the prices and then sell for slightly lower as their competitive advantage. This is in the instance where they sell directly to a retailer, which means they are still earning more than when dealing with a trader or middleman but receive lower than market pricing. Some farmers also have their own local shop where they sell what they produce. Of this one farmer said “I find out about the prices and offer my produce for a lesser amount. My neighbours don’t help out with learning pricing.” Farmers were well aware of the idea of off seasonal farming as a strategy to extend the high value season, as one woman farmer put it “I try to sell things in the off season because the prices are much better.

Some respondents felt that the government needs to amend the supply chain so that farmers and end consumers get more fair prices, however there were even still farmers who trust the trader or middleman to give them the price they deserve.
The tarai has seen market dysfunction that has led to riots and loss of lives due to unfair control over product and withholding of payments by large buyers. A discussion with a government extension worker during training about solutions to pricing challenges led to one woman questioning in a fairly aggressive manner, why this was the first time they had heard about all of the services and opportunities available to them through the government. This was responded to with more description of what loan program was available, which was one of the newest initiatives the government was working on at that time. This worker also spent quite a lot of time discussing things the women “should do” to improve their place in the value chain, but spent no time showing them how. The content of what he was saying was entirely focused on helping the women capture increased value but the women were left with little indication on how to achieve these outcomes.

While a key informant shared that farmers in villages gather their produce to sell a larger loads to middlemen, there was no sense or notation of this from respondents themselves. Perhaps they do gather their produce to entice the middleman to come on a certain day, however there was no indication that this garnered higher prices.

4.8.1 Dealing with middlemen

Women are often responsible for carrying the produce to the road, or to the city by bus, which often takes a several kilometer walk to get there. As this activity is time consuming, women often said they prefer to just sell to the trader to save time, and several respondents said it is easier dealing with just one trader rather than several if they were to go to a larger market. Figure 4.5 shows that over 60 per cent
of women take goods to the market either by delivery to transport or directly
(either by carrying it, or taking it on a bus or by car if one is available). Overall in 40 per cent of responses said that someone in the household takes it directly to the market, or 14 per cent say they sell it themselves either at the farm gate of in their own shop. Taking it directly to the market could still mean they are selling to a trader or middleman who aggregates produce and sells it either retail or wholesale to another trader.

There is a range of impressions of the middlemen as either taking too much profit, or simply being a means to an end. There is little question that most if not all respondents to the survey and informant interviews stated that using middlemen decreases farmer prices, and are a roadblock of sorts for farmers to get what they deem ‘fair prices’ for their produce. Of this, one woman farmer said explicitly, “The mediator takes most of the money. We do a lot of hard work and get paid very little. We would go straight to the market but we don’t have the time to sit there all day.
and sell for better prices. If I sell something for 50 rupees to the mediator then the middleman sells for 80 rupees.”

Three respondents in the study had yet to sell their produce, otherwise every farmer interviewed responded in some fashion as to the role the middleman plays in the business of selling produce.

4.8.2 Characteristics of being an entrepreneur

Participants were asked what they think makes an entrepreneur, and generally there was no consensus on what one is. There were, however, two main categories of responses: 1) feelings or specific characteristics and 2) tangible changes related to income.

Table 4.3 outlines the characteristics offered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics and Feelings</th>
<th>Income related Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone who is one or more of: hardworking, motivated, cost efficient, knowledgeable, time-wise, self confident, their own boss, seeking out new opportunities.</td>
<td>The ability to handle monetary transactions on one’s own Tracking profits and losses over time Someone who is saving money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feelings such as pride and feeling accomplished</td>
<td>Independence and having one’s own income from the farm business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More confident to try and explore new ideas</td>
<td>Having a ‘legitimate’ or expanding farm size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics and Feelings</td>
<td>Income related Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better reputation as a “business person” from negotiating skills</td>
<td>Earning more money and working with fixed prices; ability to increase assets such as more tunnels, land or transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being unreliant on the husband’s income or input; others being reliant on them</td>
<td>Ability to employ other people Switching from an unprofitable enterprise (for example a shop) to a profitable farm business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having good relationships with</td>
<td>Wanting to expand the output and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
neighbours and creating a good life for their family | make more profits

| Someone who is compelled by family demands to work on the farm | Ability to earn a living solely on the farm income |

Most female respondents noted that part of their entrepreneurship meant being independent from their husband, as one woman put it, “Before, my husband used to get all the income, but now I am earning money for myself.” Another woman felt that being independent was key to her entrepreneurship, as she said “I am an independent woman and am able to make my own living which helps me to be an entrepreneur.” The majority of respondents noted that increased income led to a variety of outcomes such as expanding their business, employing people or investing in on-farm infrastructure, saving money or having one’s own income, or life changes such as having a better livelihood for their family. Otherwise participants noted increased positive feelings such as accomplishment, pride, confidence or a better reputation in the community. One woman told us she had a meeting arranged to start her own women’s group for which she feels she would make a good president.

At one point during interviews, one translator shared her feelings with the researcher, as she said she was quite put off by the idea of these women always wanting to ‘make money for themselves’. We had a discussion that ‘for themselves’ really means for the children as well, and not so much for the husband as the paradigm usually dictates. At the beginning of the interviewing process this translator was quite unfamiliar with the lives of farmers, despite being quite compassionate in her outlook.
Very few others felt the opposite as they shared feeling like he/she is not an entrepreneur because he/she is alone and it is too challenging to do alone; generally not identifying as an entrepreneur; a sense that farmers cannot be entrepreneurs due to lack of market engagement, not enough profit or high volatility with markets or weather; or being unsure or having no opinion on the matter. Of this one woman farmer said “I don’t feel I am an entrepreneur because I can’t make good margins, I don’t feel confident that I am an entrepreneur.” Female respondent. The notion of entrepreneurship was not linked to being a professional or business farmer, but rather was something that each farmer had an opinion on.

4.8.3 Farming as the only option for women

Several respondents spoke of the perceived low social status of the farming profession. Some indicated that the influx of Indian migrant workers changed people’s perception on the profession based on what could be seen as racism, and others just felt that the notion of toiling in the soil and making very little money drives people to pity farmers. Of this, one man said:

Youth go abroad because it is perceived as a better opportunity than agriculture, even though the jobs they do there are worse probably than agriculture for almost the same pay… We import a lot of labour from India. There is a lot of stigma around farming because of this, as it shows a lower social status.

A hotel owner that was interviewed had a private garden to supply her hotel kitchens with ‘safe’ lettuce and said it was impossible to hire someone to take care of the garden for her. She felt that no one want’s to earn a living being a farmer because it is a lowly profession socially. On the contrary one observed event during
a training session for women farmers showed the instructor advocating that farming is a challenging profession, and that we need smart people working in the fields. He spent about 20 minutes lecturing the women on how important their work is to feeding people, and that its their responsibility to be as educated as possible to make a good living, and furthermore be proud of the work they do. Despite the potential for this being true, several key informants and farmer respondents said that youth would rather sit idle or leave Nepal than work on the family farm, and men are leaving en masse to work in either skilled or unskilled trades for cash as opposed to working on the farm. The effect of this is a noticed increase in women headed farms, as well as many women centered programs from NGOs and some policy as well to help them. Some women farmers identified that this is because women have no education and thus have no other options but farming. As one woman put it, “If women have no education, they can generate an income through farming. That’s why farming is an opportunity, is because if the girls have no education then they can still generate an income. Its really hard work, so for young girls, I would suggest that they get educated and not farm for a living.” Many women indicated that it really wasn’t a choice to enter farming and that a lack of education led them there. One woman described how hard her farm life was and stated “Having a job would be better than farming.” Despite this, there were also instances where respondents discussed forms of pushback against this development of women being essentially forced into farming by default.

Several key informants indicated that women of late have been demanding cooperatives or other group structures to help them help themselves. Women in
some remote hilly areas were quite adamant that the researcher had the responsibility to help them gain access to resources they were lacking in order to be more successful. The women who were part of a group described having a lasting support network after the training was over, and furthermore women identified that they found power through the group association as well as problem solving. As one woman articulated,

When women are alone, the social, economic challenges are too big to handle. In our group we can tackle them together and we feel they can ask the government extension for help because we are a group. We also act as a savings group so that if someone needs money they can borrow it from the group.

In the same way that the women farmers in this study were pushing back they were also being denied access in specific ways. The yearly fall training curriculum that takes place around the Kathmandu Valley through the Women’s Cooperative Society was supposedly set up based on demand—an informant said that the women would indicate during the year what they wanted to learn about and that’s what was taught. The reality seemed quite different however, as the training would open up with the question: “what are your issues you want to tackle today?” but if the topic wasn’t already in the plan, or perhaps was too difficult or too contentious (such as getting fair pricing, or new technologies), it would go unaddressed. The women perceived that better solutions to their problems were being withheld from them because in answering the opening question, they often said they expected to learn about this “new technology” that would help them solve their cropping problems, or just make things easier. Of this one respondent said “I am not satisfied with what I know about farming techniques, I know that technology is changing and I need to
change with it. I want to participate in the change with new techniques and equipment but can't." In reality, this particular training only included technology in the form of seed, or row planting, but otherwise mostly focused on home recipes for solving problems such as making good compost or curing powdery mildew. One presenter spent around 45 minutes explaining complicated math equations for fertilizer application. The audience that day was around 2/3 illiterate so the value was completely lost on the audience, despite them sitting quietly, politely trying to follow along.

4.9 Summary

In summary, this section detailed that for women farmers small loans help them attain a better farming enterprise and large-scale women farmers were said to be more independent than their counterparts, though very few women in this study could be considered large scale. A benefit to women becoming trained in vegetable
farming is that in the absence of the husband the farm can continue to thrive.

Training often helps women overcome being completely dependent on the man’s income. Professional Farmer training helps farmers to focus on making a full income from just their farm. Overall having a better business means farmers have more control over it, and develop into being a better position in their own local society. Farmers develop better negotiation skills and can maintain better power within the relationships they have through their business.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

This section will synthesize the themes outlined in the findings in order to further illuminate possible explanations or discrepancies between the findings, and the theory and literature. The themes developed in this chapter were the result of
axial coding of the coded data detailed in the findings. As well this section will further highlight responses to the objectives that were pointed to in the Findings and Literature review chapters. The analytical approach for this section relies on the conceptual framework, which analyses the opposing pressures, put upon women farmers. It takes a macro view by involving relevant policy and institutional level constructs by showing their impacts on the lives of smallholders. Next is a close inspection of the notion of empowerment from the different parties involved in the study, which reveals a divergence of interests between the institutionally developed view of empowerment according to one of the organizations included in this study, and that of the participants themselves. Following is a section on smallholders who have upended traditional cultural convention, which leads to a discussion on social justice and positioning Professional Farmers as agents for change. At the end of the chapter is a reconfiguration of the conceptual framework as a means to lead into a larger theoretical discussion of opposing factors that put pressure on the lives of women farmers and markets for smallholders. This last portion draws on the critical feminist concepts introduced in the literature review.

5.1 Sustained barriers for women farmers

Women have historically been excluded from formal education, and while current generations are becoming more educated, when training is offered for uneducated women further barriers exist based on income level. In the case of the Women’s Cooperative Society, of which many respondents from this study were a
member, those women who are mired in debt are ineligible for membership because it is necessary to have some working capital of one’s own in order to take out a loan. This means that those very low-income farmers are also ineligible for the training needed to get them out of this poverty cycle, and otherwise they are not able to take the four days off to participate in training because it would simply cost them too much. Discussion with the women farmers in this study often turned into a negative discussion about women’s lack of education and therefore lack of professional or formal job opportunities. Not only was education listed as a limiting factor for getting a ‘real job’, it is also the bias against women in urban areas which excludes them from obtaining higher paying, lower physical labor type jobs. This then leads many women into farming, or the feminization of agriculture, which respondents stated is a very physically demanding job that can lead to injury or long-term health issues\(^2\). Often times because of male migrant labour (local and abroad) women are seemingly left with little or no choice but to take on the farm responsibilities lest they sit idle or vulnerable by being reliant on the income of their husband.

Migrant labour as a long-term income strategy is supported by recent proposals being made at the policy level to make it easier to bring remittance money home safely. Overall this improves the government’s ability to partake in the benefits of this inflow of ‘free money’. Moreover this policy approach undermines efforts to developing legitimate home-grown economic development opportunities, such as more equitable engagement of smallholders in markets, particularly that of women. Land tenure policy has also been developed to allow women to more easily

\(^2\) Women also recognized that they have dual occupations, being farming and home worker, which in this context adds to physical workloads as well as use of time.
own their land, or take out favorable loans for purchase of land. In light of the perceived low awareness of their ability to own or purchase land with government loans by the participants in this study, these efforts seem more symbolic than practical. According to Reeves and Baden, a policy approach that allows women equal access to land by eliminating barriers to entry is essentially a gender equality approach that may be intrinsically primed to fail because historically these approaches lack implementation and enforcement (2000). As these findings revealed, around 50 per cent of participants have family sending them cash, which totals 36 respondents receiving funds from 46 members of their family working mostly outside the country, with some just outside the community. What this reveals is that at a policy level, not enough support is going towards building a local economy that supports its agrarian families. While many countries are facing significant rural to urban migration, it is increasingly recognized that the rural economy is atrophying thus leaving smallholders with an amount of physical labour disproportionate to the amount of income they receive, an income which is apparently barely enough to make ends meet. Even if women participants do take ownership of their land, raising the capital investment needed to grow higher value crops such as off-season tomatoes grown in tunnels certainly poses a barrier to entry. And furthermore, even if women were able to own their own land, take out a reasonable loan and start growing a new crop, their ability to negotiate is diminished based on their gender or their knowledge of fair market prices. Simply put, gender-fair policies may have the ability to eliminate barriers for women to attain assets, but this does not cause transformative change, which allows women to
either create better choices for themselves by exiting farming, or by become more equal actors in the markets.

The men and women in the study largely recognized that while middlemen provide access to markets, they do so at a significant reduction in their personal earnings. The men however, were more likely to say that they participate in a marketing cooperative to circumnavigate the middleman, whereas many women are less able to negotiate, or less able to spend the time finding individual buyers directly, such as restaurants or people with market stalls. The ability to negotiate was tied to the notion of being a Professional Farmer, which mean that you are recognized in the community as someone with significant training and knowledge on the business of farming. As such, being socially labeled as a professional meant that those whom you are negotiating with treat you more as an equal and offer better prices. In this study, 4 out of 8 men and 5 out of 56 women interviewed identified as a Professional Farmer. Women overtly recognized their lack of Professional Farmer status meant they have lower bargaining power. While any change in policy allowing women equal rights is always needed and welcomed, in the case of women owning land it is difficult to see how change will actually appear on the ground based on the variety of other barriers women face which men often do not experience as acutely. Supporting a high inflow of remittance money to small farms also undermines the women’s own ability to create transformative change and achieve the harmonious relationships between genders they seek as part of their empowerment process.
5.2 Divergent views of empowerment

A reflective review of the 12 Promises that are outlined in the table on page 75, which are the mandate of the Women’s Cooperative Society in Kathmandu, reveals that an empowered woman is one who is independently supported by an increased income and commitment to responsible spending and saving. Beyond that foundation, she is part of a larger social sphere wherein people rely on each other for support both economic and welfare based, and that both contribute to a better community. Through living with honesty and integrity, she alters her behaviors in ways that not only benefit herself but her community members and her children. For the next generation, she instills in her family a sense of good living, both through a healthy diet and clean living conditions, and perhaps most importantly, through sending both genders of her children to school equally. In this way, a cycle of positivity is set up for her family, and she can ensure she is raising her children in a good community of like-minded people. This view of empowerment as created by the Women’s Cooperative society, outlines tangible outcomes that can be achieved and even measured by others. If the institution were to implement monitoring and evaluation of empowerment by using the 12 Promises, they could easily make a house visit and conduct a visual assessment, as well as an interview that would reveal the woman herself achieved all the goals laid out for her. The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index designed jointly by IFPRI and USAID has a similar aim, to act as a “composite measurement tool that indicates women’s control over critical parts of their lives in the household, community, and economy” (IFPRI, 2015). Both of these assessments are done through quantitatively
accounting for empowerment according to attributes the institutions have put value on. During interviews however, the WCS members in this study who never mentioned these promises, or revealed that their view of empowerment aligned with them very closely. The only overt overlap between the women’s description of aspirations or agency related to being able to send their kids to school, but otherwise their personal goals and interests were vastly different. While the 12 Promises focus on community and supporting others through self-responsibility, the women really revealed they were interested in independence, and taking more control over their assets such as decisions about the land or financial income. They strive to be treated equally to their partners by asking permission less, relying less on others and focusing more on becoming leaders, which increases their social status and ability to negotiate in the market. Even the informant from WCS later said that in order to counteract patriarchy, women have to become more independent from their husbands and become leaders, perhaps for the same outcomes. According to respondents in this study, the notion of an empowered woman relies more on independent problem solving and working in harmony with their families, and the institutionally developed view of empowerment misses these ideas entirely. This study recognizes that there are a wide variety of women involved in various organizations outside of the WCS however, there are pervasive problems that this inspection of the 12 Promises highlights. Of this Cornwall and Rivas would argue that an institution creating a view of empowerment does not “offer us the radical reconfiguration of the frame through which social and gender relations are experienced” (2015:404). Nowhere in the promises does it recognize
that family harmony between partners (largely husband and wife, or other generations within the household) was what the women were proud or interested in achieving. While respondents themselves recognize what an empowered life means to them, programs and mandates at times miss out on the fact that the organization’s role is to create an enabling environment that facilitates empowerment defined in terms of the participant’s views and not leave them to the unaccounted for periphery (Reeves & Baden, 2000).

Women farmers in this study would often speak about wanting money or other things ‘for themselves’ as goals or outcome of training, yet the overarching reality is that the women with absent partners could be doing it to reduce their vulnerability by covering expenses on their own, or could simply be interested in being less reliant on someone else’s income. For men, if a situation is such that they are unhappy with their income or unable to make the amount of money they need to help their family thrive, they have the option to migrate elsewhere for what they perceive as better opportunities, which can even mean to a nearby city. A lack of domestic employment options puts women in a difficult position. While they do have choice, it is limited to moving to the city and relying on their husbands’ incomes, moving abroad or working in the city as housemaids for very low wages, or lastly, trying to make something work on their family farms. Of this last option, many women said it would be better to get educated and find a job, recognizing that the urban hiring bias means the job really would not be very fulfilling. The women farmers in this study recognize their ability to make choices, but moreover see that they are unable to change the choices on offer (Reeves & Baden, 2000).
5.3 Upending gender conventions

Women farmers in this study stated they were more able to make financial decisions when they are more educated than their husbands, and so it is clear from the variety of responses related to training and literacy that those individuals who are educated, are most able to participate in financial decisions and negotiation. In fact the number of women who said they were literate in this study is at a higher incidence than those national statistics outlined in the literature review. The tables in the Findings titled “Tasks completed by sex” (Page 86) revealed that women trended towards being more involved in the physical labor aspects of farming, and slightly less in the business aspects of the farm. This aligns with the generally accepted contention that roles designated as ‘women’s roles’ are less valued and less economically significant than those designated as ‘men’s roles’, (Reeves & Baden, 2000; FAO, 2011). Despite this women overall were more involved in running the farm from beginning to end, thus were more in charge of the financial decisions as well. The reason why this is significant, is that for the men who are working nearby, or absent but are able to contact women by phone, they could ostensibly maintain control over finances as it is not physically required that they be there to do so. As the study revealed, over 55 per cent of households in the study have husbands as the heads, and combined with father in laws, or fathers or grandfathers as head, the total of male headed households becomes 71 per cent, yet, the women in this study are significantly more involved in the farm business aspect of farming than men. As women in many instances from this study were taking on more monetary related
responsibilities in their households, it allows us to question what the role of ‘head of household’ really means when both partners are contributing financially to the home. It also allows us to investigate the values or assumptions made based on gender disaggregated data correlating head of household with household poverty rates found in the National Livelihood Standards Surveys of Nepal. A 2010 survey by ICIMOD shows a trend of women headed households becoming less impoverished at a faster rate than men headed households (Hunzai & Gerlitz, 2010).

In the case of this study, women who are making significant decisions and contributions to the household finances based on experience and literacy are supporting households categorized as ‘men headed’. Their involvement could either contribute or detract from success but either way, statistics based on the head of household are problematic when taken at face value.

While smallholders are conventionally positioned as peasant farmers working outside the markets, the empowered farmers in this study indicated that they are working on becoming Business Farmers or Professional Farmers, which requires a certain amount of training and knowledge. Thus, the training process is imbedded in the empowerment process. These farmers are the first generation making a departure from farming the way their ‘grandfathers’ did, which was referred to as “old man” farming, an approach that relies on a peasant mentality of subsistence as opposed to a capitalistic mind frame. Professional Farmers are farming with intention, with a plan to maximize growth and income using limited resources, but doing so using new knowledge and technology when it is available. They recognize that there is no end to learning, and that technology is a rapidly
developing phenomenon that they need to participate in lest they be left behind. If they are being left behind, as was the case for some older generations, younger more educated women would take the training to then transfer that knowledge to their families. In this way uneducated illiterate farmers were also trying to participate in new knowledge, rather than continuing to proliferate their ‘old man’ ways.

The notion of Professional Farmer is in fact an appropriation of a rather urban idea. Professionals are known to work in offices in the city, however here in this context, farmers accumulating an array of specific and forward thinking techniques are able to claim professional status. For women especially this idea is quite compelling, because those women who identified as Professionals spoke of no longer being dominated by society or by their husbands. Women are turning gender roles around by becoming more equal to their husbands or family members, or even by perhaps becoming more dominant than their partners, through the acquisition of a status for themselves that is respected in their communities. Women are achieving this status by taking training that was said in the literature to normally be acquired or dominated by men.

5.4 Towards a capitalistic agricultural sector

It was argued in the literature review that Nepal is moving away from a being a semi-feudal state as evidenced through policy reforms, changes supporting Nepal to accede into the World Trade Organization, and land tenure reforms. Recognizing this transformation, it is important to situate the findings of this study in this
emerging context. Professional Farming is one iteration of how farmers are perhaps embracing the capitalistic mindset which Mohanty so vitally argues is arranged to exclude women and other marginalized peoples. The findings in this study also show that farmers organize themselves in other ways such that they can further participate in a capitalistic system that may be doomed to fail them.

The first example of farmers are organizing themselves for capitalistic endeavors is shown is through responses related to collaboration and networking. This study showed that 84 per cent of respondents are part of a cooperative group, and a further 7 per cent are involved in informal farming groups. The benefits received from these groups are explicitly economic and knowledge based, as farmers are able to group market, borrow or lend with each other or the cooperative, and share ideas through problem solving. The restaurateurs based in the city whose interviews were part of the observations, said they were unable to form a group because the political atmosphere was too volatile and the competition too intense in their type of business. It could be said that they are in a time of negative peace, whereby there is an absence of violence but restoration through social democratic processes had yet to begin. Despite this there appears to be a space for farmers to make change through collective action, and benefit from the power shift that occurs once they are organized and involved. Farmers are able to become more competitive and self reliant through this group formation, whereas the restaurateurs felt unable to form groups and organize to increase their competitiveness. Even the inner city farmers in Pokhara felt comfortable arranging
or rather, demanding training sessions from the local government agents, despite a military training camp being based on the other side of the valley.

Secondly through the development of gender equity of members within the farming community, women are especially able to position their farming enterprise as a capitalistic endeavor. In this study, women and men are largely seen doing all tasks on the farm from planting to marketing. Women and men most often said there wasn’t anything they couldn’t do based on their gender, and considering most of these women had undergone some form of training, they were each capable of doing most or all tasks on their farm from planting to selling. The only discrepancies between the belief that everyone does everything on the farm, and what was recorded as who actually does things, related to plowing and banking. The idea of women being incapable of doing the plowing due to physical limitations is possibly a hangover from past times, and is possibly an actual physical limitation, or it could be because a man runs a or traditional plow to get the job done. The literature called these ideas “Golden Ageism” which as a reminder, referred to desire for a time “when youth respected their elders, and where women were subordinate to men” (Myrttinen, et al., 2014: 9). There were instances noted in the interviews of

---

3 As a side note, Nepal very recently experienced a violent insurgency that saw many people killed and many more displaced. My translator said they moved their original school business because it was burned to the ground. So the military presence in cities is noted because not only do they seem primed for action, but also their presence acts as a reminder to civilians or perhaps to dissenters that swift and immediate action can be taken if violence arises again. For the SAARC meeting in November, many dignitaries were present; so various preventative safety measures were taken. In Lumbini where Buddha was born, every 15 feet a military or police agent was present and were seen holding a semi-automatic weapon. The airspace around Kathmandu was closed down for the 3 days during the meeting cancelling all international and domestic flights. Taxicabs in the city with either an odd or even registration number were banned from running during the meetings so that congestion would be lower and control would be easier. While I as a researcher felt entirely safe throughout the duration of the research, it was dually noted that the military presence was a visible reaction to something that happened not so long ago.
things women didn’t do because it was physically straining, such as applying fertilizer, but mostly women did not comment concretely either way as to why they did or did not plow. Furthermore, making use of a banking institution is difficult. Many women don’t have the land title in their names thus they are unable to take out a loan. Some women also noted that they don’t do the banking because they are not educated, however from the literature, many small farmers are unable to get loans from banks because the lenders are unwilling to work with them due to their high risk factors. Farmers do go to the bank however, as over 30 per cent of all participants in this study said had savings account, and at times when multiple generations were doing an interview together, women said they each had their own account. Some of the more physically demanding tasks such as weeding and harvesting are largely done by women only, however this could be because the man is absent working elsewhere, or because that task is relegated to the woman farmer. On that note, the women are willing and able to take charge of their farming operation and do all the tasks required of them to make it a money making venture. Women were proud of sending their children to school but the majority of women respondents stated that making money “for themselves” was the motivation for farming.

When asked about their perceptions of entrepreneurship (arguably a key element of working within a capitalistic environment), all farmers had an idea of what one was, whether they identified as being an entrepreneur or not. The question was originally included in the farmer questionnaire to see if entrepreneurship was a proxy for masculine qualities. The results of this question
were quite varied, as this next section will describe. For women respondents, they generally answered that their definition of entrepreneurship was directly related an increased level of independence from their husband. Responses were otherwise divided into monetary characteristics or improved feelings of self worth, however most responses were not positioned in a way that showed they felt more equal in society. Farmers’ descriptions of entrepreneurship are mainly individualistic views of improvement, similar to how Professional Farming benefits the individual by allowing them to get ahead of where they are. No participants said they want to do better than their neighbors and when asked 'what they admired' about a neighbor (as a means to probe an answer related to defining entrepreneurship), no participant would say they envy others’ talents, which gave the impression that the idea wasn’t culturally appropriate. While being an entrepreneur was mostly a reflection of business success, it did not relate to an increased sense of equity within the farming community. The only level at which a positive relationship between entrepreneurship and gender equity exists, is perhaps shown in the idea that everyone has the potential to be one, as opposed to Professional Farming which is exclusive in that it requires certain training to achieve that status. Being an entrepreneur is mostly a positive thing that improves livelihoods and income, but the potential of being an entrepreneur might not be a step in the right direction towards gender equity among farming community members. Gender equity, which allows women to become their own agents of change comes with education, which in this study was found to occur after training and by becoming more professional (Reeves & Baden, 2000).
5.5 Professional Farmers as agents of change

To help summarize the discussion, the following section will analyze the enabling and disenabling factors that allow for a woman farmer to increase local market engagement and inspect whether she increases personal empowerment as well which for some takes the form of becoming a Professional Farmer. The theoretical framework relies on a series of enabling and disenabling factors that were selected and organized based on the findings of the literature review. By reorganizing the placement of the opposing factors, a more realistic view according to the participants involved in this study will be revealed.

Figure 5.1 Original Theoretical Framework

The original framework, Figure 5.1, shows the left side as the enabling factors that allow for transformational change while the right side shows the disenabling factors that inhibit change. At the centre is the 'Woman farmer perceived as commercialized'. This description is based on participant selection, whereby the key informants who allowed for community entry were asked to connect the researcher with farmers whom they thought were more commercialized than others in the village or community. In brief, 'Poverty alleviation' and
'Improved livelihood' are positioned to show their contribution to an enabling environment for more commercialized women farmers. As per the literature review, the amount and focus of many NGO projects allow more women farmers to access training and this is based on the 'Feminization of agriculture', as well as the need to improve the status of women. The government itself is working on this as well as by researching specific value chain opportunities as well as through policy, but this was mostly in superficial ways as women are described as a homogenous group lumped in with other marginalized people. On the opposing side, the economy is seen as limiting because if Mohanty's argument that the globalization process includes the exclusion or subordination of women is true, then capitalist women farmers may never succeed. Subsistence farming is spurred on by illiteracy and lack of access, and for women due to lack of decision-making ability and access to household wealth. Furthermore, a close inspection of policy revealed that there is a pervasive disconnect between what is needed for gender inclusive policy, and what is happening on the ground. Now consider the revised version, Figure 5.2 when reconfiguring this information with what emerged through the findings:

Figure 5.2 Revised Theoretical Framework based on Findings
The factors above the dotted line remained unchanged, whereas those below it switch sides, with the exception of Government Inclusion Efforts, which disappeared altogether. ‘Government inclusion efforts’, while on the surface appeared to actually be working towards helping improve the status of women, really lacked intention and implementation on the ground according to this study, and so was folded into the ‘Gender policy reality and disconnect’ line on the right side of disenabling factors. Furthermore access to capital was not an option for women other than those who are part of a borrowing and lending cooperative. Of the respondents who did borrow money, about half (19) said it was for inputs and the rest (21) used it for capital investment in the farm. The importance in this distinction is that spending loan money on day to day farm investments doesn’t get a farmer ahead, it keeps them from becoming insolvent, which indicates that the level of working capital on those farms is borderline poverty. Those who are more like Professional Farmers invested into things, which will increase their earning potential, and move them closer to commercialization. Being a Professional Farmer requires being capitalistic and market-oriented, which is one pathway to commercialization. Of the farmers who said they didn’t borrow money, many had
already made significant capital investments and so did not need investment money, and as for the rest, it is unknown why they did not borrow or even if they needed to. Overall however, the situation with women and their lack of access to capital, the low engagement in formal banking for loans indicates that access to capital is still a disenabling factor for small farmers.

Value chain opportunities were originally set out in the literature as a contentious issue, however the original thinking was that there might be opportunities for women especially to engage successfully in markets if they had become market oriented. It was found however that women were very seldom able to negotiate fair prices from middlemen, and mainly found success with marketing groups that were largely male dominated based on the organizational structure of the ones observed in this study. The women interviewed in Kathmandu were basically ignored at training when they insisted that one of their biggest problems was getting fair prices for their goods. This essentially means that while they are market oriented, they could very well be operating at subsistence level income if the outside family contribution was taken away. Despite all the work and knowledge they are implementing, if they are unable to negotiate fair margins with the middlemen, they will never be able to go beyond subsistence level income.

Similarly ‘Global capitalism’ was introduced on the right which is an indication of larger market forces that impact by lowering prices through imports, and by the recognition of the smallholders themselves that they are not competing at a global level, it is more at the local level. But by and large Nepal is still a net importer of food, and while the local market is robust, the global nature of not only
the vegetable market, but also of inputs such as seed and fertilizer make it increasingly hard for smallholders to be competitive without significant investment of on-farm infrastructure, government support that is accessible, professional training, group marketing and at the heart of it all, meaningful inclusion of women. Mohanty would argue that this proves her point, that most markets local and global systematically exclude women. Of this she states that by:

> paying attention to and theorizing the experiences of these communities of women and girls that we demystify capitalism as a system of debilitating sexism and racism and envision anti-capitalist resistance. (2003:235).

Mohanty may actually be horrified by the idea that the space where the women farmers in this study are finding empowerment is primarily through Professional Farming, a capitalistic endeavor that allows them to claim power and status for themselves. Others may agree with her, such as Louise Fresco who says that the future of globalization may entail favouring low labour costs and the marginalization of small producers, or Glover who questions if globally developed pro-poor farming technologies needed for commercialization actually contributes to the success of small farmers (Fresco, 2009; Glover, 2010). In opposition to this, a study conducted in nearby India, entitled *Paradoxes of Globalisation, Liberalisation and Gender Equality: The Worldviews of the Lower Middle Class in West Bengal, India* women respondents from a study identified that there were “greater opportunities to challenge preexisting patriarchal norms” and this led to “opportunities for greater independence” on the part of women through successful market engagement (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003:549). Globalization is not a new phenomenon but dealing with its impact at the smallholder level is still a quandary for many researchers,
development projects and for smallholders themselves. In the context of this research the global markets are a challenge for smallholders and the people involved in this study dually recognize that they are competing at a local level because of these pressures.

Factors that shifted to the left to become enabling factors were ‘Decision-making ability’, ‘Access to household wealth’ and added was ‘Literacy’. Women in this study were found to be making a significant amount of decisions regardless of where they lived or what caste they were. According to the charts in the findings called “Farm tasks competed by gender”, 35 instances show that women are solely or with their partner involved in making financial decisions, and that 34 responses indicated men only make the financial decisions. Not only do women have space within the household to make decisions but they tend to have the knowledge, or are aware of what knowledge they don’t have as well. The literature review indicated that this trend tended to change by village or caste or class, however here having such a small sample of a broad mix of individuals, this study isn’t able to inspect at the level of detail, but moreover shows that women are significantly involved. This is also true of access to household wealth, as the overwhelming majority of women were interested in earning more money ‘for themselves’ and that they said they were often times able to pay for household expenses by themselves. As well, farmers’ sense of entrepreneurship was strongly tied to income. This statement does not undermine the fact that they could be operating at a subsistence level of income and expenses, but women were quite adamant about the benefits of the farm
to their own access to household income, as evidenced by the tasks by Task by gender charts in the findings.

Lastly the women in this group were more literate than national standards, and when illiterate, older generations were sending their young people to training for them. In this way they are able to still benefit from training that either requires or would benefit from literacy. There were training sessions with many illiterate women, and their struggles are recognized. The small sampling of women was intentionally selected in this study for characteristics related to being market oriented, which may mean their level of schooling or literacy is higher than average. As such illiteracy and literacy are both enabling and disenabling factors.

The essential question of this research is positing that it isn’t known if or how women are benefitting from participation commercial or market oriented vegetable enterprises. It asks this because if Nepal is truly going to push for the commercialization of its agricultural enterprises beyond the current 1 per cent as a route to economic development, the role of women in that process should clearly be understood. Chandra Mohanty states quite clearly in her updated chapter investigating her 1986 paper Under Western Eyes, that she believes that capitalistic values that rely on “private property and profit” maintained by “immense power” are becoming naturalized because of global forces that are driven by sexist, racist and homocentric forces (2003:14). If Mohanty’s ideas are merged with the question of women and the commercialization process in Nepal, the issue of women in markets becomes one of social justice. The methodology for change comes in the empowerment of women farmers through training that allows them to take a more
dominant role in society by assuming the identity of an astute Professional Farmer who may engage in collective action that allows for self-reliance. While women and men find success through working in harmony, women need to push back against the patriarchal norms that transcend caste to systemically oppress them. In this way, gender equity will exist for the broader Nepali society, and the expectations of women will change. By assuming a more dominant role, women will assert their ability to influence changes in choice, and will better articulate the issues they face on a daily basis.

5.6 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the emergent issues that were revealed through further analysis of the Findings. Using the theoretical framework, it was revealed that the women farmers in this study are working towards their own empowerment, which may not be reconciled by the institutionally developed view outlined and represented by the 12 Promises. Women are seen to have more barriers than men, but are also seen upending gender conventions, which go against cultural norms according to the literature review. Furthermore the theoretical framework was re-envisioned and supplemented by an overturning of social justice issues through a new model that sees Professional Farmers as agents for change. The next chapter will provide a specific summary of each objective outlined at the outset of this thesis.

Chapter 6: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

6.1 Summary
The following section presents the conclusions under the headings of the objectives outlined at the outset of this paper.

6.1.1 Objective 1: Knowledge and experience skillset of market-oriented farmers

- The nature of the vegetable market and smallholder farmers’ perceived role
- Market engagement challenges and issues, and management strategies

The smallholders in this study were found to be market-oriented and expressed a wide range of experience with selling and pricing their produce. The vegetable market itself fluctuates often based on weather impacts as well as festival demands. Imports play a large role in driving prices down in some areas, and farmers in this study recognized that they are currently not able to compete in international markets.

While three farmers had yet to sell into the market, the majority had experience with selling either directly to a shop or market, or to a middleman in order to access the market. Many rural villages have people who supply vegetables, milk and meat locally so the vegetable farmers themselves can either sell into stall shops, at their own gate, or use alternate means to get their produce to the larger city centre. In order to do this, they must either use a middleman or trader, or take the goods to market themselves, which can be costly as far as time and money go. Farmers in this study largely said that using the middleman cuts their profits by a significant amount, however only a few respondents named an actual price difference and the literature indicated that middlemen take about 30 per cent of the profits. Some farmers take the trader’s word for face value on pricing, while others
were more skeptical but still felt that middlemen set the prices and thus the farmers had low negotiating power. Some farmers, mostly in the Tansen area had formed marketing groups so that farmers had choice in where to sell their produce to. The benefit of the marketing group is that the farmers don't need to take on the negotiating themselves, and also benefit from someone else with more experience to negotiate on their behalf. In this instance, if farmers feel the price is too low, they can call shops or other buyers themselves and sort out an arrangement that better suits their interests.

Overall farmers’ roles in the market are to supply an unending local demand through channels that essentially force them to sacrifice profits. In this way they are at the receiving end of pricing decisions, making them price takers rather than price makers. When trained as professionals, farmers felt better equipped to negotiate, and felt their reputation as astute business people allowed them to leverage a better position of power within the relationships that require negotiation. These were the minority of the group however, as only five (5) men and four (4) women identified that they are professionals, none of whom were in the Kathmandu sample. The remainder of the farmers in this study felt they require more training in order to improve their farming practices and business practices which overall could lead to better livelihood outcomes. At times farmers identified that they received training for activities or practices, which require more technology to which they have no access. The training sessions attended in Kathmandu through the Women’s Cooperative Society appeared to teach some new techniques, but focused primarily on problem solving for issues, which women had had for years. The curriculum for
the sessions attended by the researcher appeared to circumnavigate the pressing
issues of pricing and basic yet key business management strategies, and as such
were falling short of addressing systemic issues in favour of training that failed to
elevate their skillset to a place where they may be more competitive.

6.1.2 Objective 2: The extent to which market-oriented farming contributes to
empowerment

➢ The gendered experience of farmers and perceived opportunities to improve

➢ The impacts of the enabling and disenabling factors

The women involved in this study largely recognized that farming may not have
been a first choice for their life’s work. They felt that because they lacked primary
education, they were left with few options that ultimately drove them into farming.
The few men encountered through this research were mostly farming after having
had a career elsewhere either in Nepal or abroad. They were largely more business
oriented and were more forthright in seeking out resources to help themselves and
their fellow farmers, such as the men outside of Tansen who were very involved in
either research activities with universities, or through projects supported by NGOs.
This leads to farmers involvement in co-creation of knowledge. The women farmers
who were interviewed in the same area did not show the same amount of business
acumen, although there were instances of women who showed their leadership
qualities. The women in Pokhara versus the male respondents were not doing quite
as well as far as feeling in control of their livelihoods. Several women from this
group were farming alone, as their husbands were working at military or policemen outside the area. Those women were not directly affiliated with an NGO training program were most interested in seeing some training solutions provided for them. The men in this instance had already received training, which allowed them to be considered both Professional Farmers as well as business farmers. In Kathmandu the situation was similar to the other two areas. The gendered experience is that of inequality as far as education, mobility for other types of work, negotiating power in the markets and possibly training that leads to a more professional status. The women in this study were more likely to do physical tasks on the farm, but only slightly, and were overall more involved in decision making and taking loans than the literature would have suggested. It would seem that building on the confidence of the women in this study by training them to be Professional Farmers, would make room for them to assertively demand what they need to improve their livelihoods.

The common thread within the outlook on empowerment between both farmer respondents as well as key informants, is that becoming a leader allows women farmers to create space wherein they take care of their own needs as well as that of their family. Being equal to others in the household only adds to this.

A force field of enabling and disenabling factors are presented in the theoretical framework and work to show the varying pressures women farmers are under from either side. At the end of the discussion a new version of this framework is presented, as well as a new model which incorporates more specific theory as to the capitalistic pressures and their impact on small farmers; especially those who are women. This research presumed that there would be space for
women farmers to become empowered through market engagement and it would appear that the women interviewed in this study are able to act with agency in their livelihood activities.

Since a definition for empowerment is subjective, a definition was developed based on the farmer respondents’ experience. Largely women are able to exert power in their own domain, but not as much in larger meso and macro levels of society. This takes the form of being able to improve their livelihoods, but not so much that they are earning large profits, as evidenced by the amount of households in this study who receive payments from off-farm family members. Women still experience issues with accessing enough capital to expand on farm infrastructure, which would enable them to increase their income generating power. Furthermore the women in this study said they are interested in earning profits for themselves so they no longer have to ask for allowance money from their partners. They are interested in using the new knowledge they have learned from training, and feel they are quite capable in doing so. A few participants spoke of exiting the traditional food system altogether by growing their own fresh, healthy food, so as reduce dependence on the traditional food chain and ensure food security for their families.

Overall the impact of the enabling and disenabling factors is that the amount of pressure exerted on women farmers is such that the gender inequality they face becomes an issue of social justice. The naturalized capitalist values outlined by Chandra Mohanty suggest that the global forces are established such that they go against women’s interests in developing countries, and that is recognized in this
study. To counteract this global force it is imperative that women farmers increase their ability to capture more value from the market, by inserting themselves at higher value, more critical points along the value chain. If more women farmers were to be trained as Professional Farmers, they would have the skills and knowledge necessary to circumvent the financial bottlenecks in the vegetable value chain and create their own means to direct market for better value. Asserting their own power through collective action would allow them to create a unified voice in political and development arenas. In this way, women will continue to upend convention, proving that women can be and are professionals in their fields.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

While insights have been revealed from this research as to some of the experiences and strategies women have with engaging in more market oriented operations, the limitation of the number of participants as well as the spread of their geographic locations leads to the possibility that this study may have homogenized their experiences inadvertently. As such, a broader study of any of the locations by launching a bigger study based on a more balanced inspection of men and women farmers with similar backgrounds may yield more detailed information based on that specific context. The differences in locations were outlined at the outset through the methods chapter but it would still be valuable to investigate as the limited scope of this research lends to the need for a deeper look into the possible solutions raised from the synthesis portion of the discussion. Furthermore, youth retention in agriculture is a huge issue for Nepal (and many countries including
Canada), so investigating strategies for success on the part of youth retention is something that needs to be explored. This is especially true in a context where the government is offering funds for start-up operations that would eliminate one huge barrier to entry for this group. Farmers also were revealed to have a mixed social status in the different regions particularly in urban areas, and this raises the question of how farmers are perceived and whether this has any major influence on whether that is driving youth or men abroad.

6.3 Suggestions for turning research into better practice

The hope of every researcher is to have an impact or to contribute their ideas and energy into something that has meaning or that supports a greater good. This research relied on several relationships with NGOs of varying closeness in order to gain community entry, and so the follow represent some of the suggestions which will in turn be returned to those organizations in the form of a coherent report that will hopefully feed into their broader ideas about programming that supports further success of women farmers.

6.3.1 Support of community leadership

Yearly training which can be taken a one or two times per year does not go far enough to serve the ongoing needs of small farmers. During one training session in Kathmandu, a woman learned how to solve a pest problem and she noted “I can’t believe I have had this problem for 15 years and just learned how to solve it right now!” As such, the development of Farmer Leaders could be a resource point for
many farmers in small and remote communities. This person would be knowledgeable, successful, interested in helping others and likely literate, so that the resource books could be shared with others who aren’t. Often in communities the accolades and respect that come along with the position is reason enough to do it. Simple things like, having a “Farmer Leader” sign for this individual to hang on the door, as well as official t-shirts can be the encouragement the leader needs to do the job.

This farm leadership group of women could also serve as a working group to feed suggestions and updates back into their local NGO or government officers, ensuring that the community members have a comrade speaking up on their behalf for their best interest when it comes to the planning and implementation of programs.

6.3.2 Professional Farmer Certificate Program

At one of the training sessions in Kathmandu, while waiting for a trainer who was evidently lost, the Women’s Cooperative Society staff member took the time to give a speech about the importance of having ‘smart farmers’ in the fields, because while farming is the backbone of the Nepali economy it is a difficult industry. Because this is true, many NGOs such as WCS who offer farmer training programs are in an excellent position to revamp their training program to create a Professional Farmer Certificate program in conjunction with the Agricultural Department of Nepal. The benefits to this would be manifold:
• Women would be incentivized to take both basic and advanced training, pass a test, and receive recognition of their knowledge and implementation.

• Women in the broader study identified that being identified as an ‘astute business person’ allowed them to better negotiate for what they needed. Being identified as Professional Farmers could help women exert greater power in a field that is often dominated by men when it comes to power over financial assets.

• NGOs would have the opportunity to implement evaluation mechanisms that the learning has been implemented on farm, through the certification process.

• A longer-term plan could be developed with the assistance of the funding agents to ensure that appropriate certification goals are set, and interest is in supporting the program long term by providing input into its development.

• Membership for farmer groups in some areas could grow, and this extra support could provide more women to feed into a savings and loans program, that could help NGOs like WCS work towards total financial independence from funders.

6.3.3 Knowledge Hubs

The researcher was able to attend the first three days of two different training events with WCS. The premise was to have two days of theory and two days of in field learning, however the six(6) days that were attended were only theory based in the classroom setting. The benefit to the field component is that those learners who aren’t able to take notes due to illiteracy, can learn by other
means. Additionally, to better serve women who are illiterate, as well as literate, materials need to be developed to better remind the women in the future of the lessons they learned. If knowledge hubs were created from existing women’s groups, reference materials would be made available at central locations to aid with problem solving, so farmers have more opportunities to deal with specific pest or disease problems throughout the year. These hubs could also be built into existing AgroVets, where many farmers get their supplies. As a value added service, more people would be interested in patronizing legitimate businesses, creating a sustainable business for those small shops.

This is especially true when discussing:

- How to identify good quality seed (e.g., packaging and labeling, physical appearance, etc)
- A quick reference guide to planting and cropping information for all vegetable crops would allow women to try new crops, and begin with the appropriate specifications (e.g., seeding rates, timing, row spacing, fertilizer.)
- Basic business planning materials, such as a profit and loss ledger with instructions on how to use it.
- Training for other small businesses so women can reduce single-source income risk as well as reduce physical labor burden, and have an income source when physically farming isn’t possible any longer.
6.3.4 Support of Collective Action

Women often cited lack of fair pricing as a major barrier to success. This was also a topic that was skirted during training sessions in favour of more tangible problem solving such as disease or pest management. To help mitigate this, many NGOs are ideally situated to help women form vegetable marketing hubs to help them negotiate better prices. Examples of this approach are seen currently in action all across Nepal, as well as in nearby Bangladesh and India. Funds could be put towards a matching program where communities who want to participate in the hub could save and pay a certain amount of money, which could then be matched by NGO program supporters. A small storage building would be erected, a manager trained and paid by a per-kilo processing of vegetables, and that person would then negotiate on behalf of the other farmers.

6.4 Summary of Recommendations

The benefit to these four approaches is that they work to leverage development infrastructure that already exists, and also work to build the capacity of community leaders who are already in the position to influence and lead their village out of poverty. The role of the NGO can be diminished once the initial trainings happen of the Farmer leaders or Professional Farmers, as they will be equipped with enough to improve their standards. Beyond that, yearly updates would be appropriate, however at the outset, a thorough professional training program would be necessary to get all farmers up to an improved standard.
6.5 Concluding thoughts

Research such as this contributes to a closer representation of the plurality of voices of the men and women who toil in the fields to feed their families and countries. It works to counteract the homogenizing forces of globalization and of the western feminism perspectives that Mohanty argues against in her article. The relevance of her ideas to the new model proposed at the end of Chapter 5 is that it positions women's ability to act with agency as an issue of social justice that can only be addressed when the women's own notions of empowerment are taken into consideration. In this study, we see women who have the same potential to become entrepreneurs as men, who respect Professional Farmers and perhaps strive to become one, and who have acute interests in circumnavigating the bottlenecks of the markets where they are unjustly undermined by unfair pricing schemes.

Chapter 7: References & Appendices

7.1 References


International Trade Centre (2013). Farmers in Pokhara now fix prices of their products. ITC, Switzerland.


New IFAD report shows rural women are key to unlocking economic and social benefits of climate adaptation. (March 2014). IFAD Press Release. IFAD, Rome.


The state of food insecurity in the world 2013: The multiple dimensions of food security. (2013). Rome: FAO, IFAD and WFP.


Appendix A:

Key Informant Interview Question Bank
Background:
Please tell me a little about yourself and how you got to working with farmers?
What is your role in working with seed farmers and how for how long?
What is the usual seasonal cycle for seed farmers? Is this a good year?
How are prices for seed farmers and access to credit?
How does this compare to other commodities (fresh veggies, etc)?

Commercialisation of Farms:
What are the characteristics of smallholder farms in this area?
What makes a farm more commercialised?
What do you feel is hindering commercialisation on small farms in Nepal?
What distinguishes a seed farmer from other farmers?

Women and Farming:
How do you feel that male outmigration has effected farms in this area?
Do you see more women involved in projects?
How does your organisation work with women farmers, what is the approach?
Do you feel women are more involved in decision-making than previously?
What evidence have you seen that women are more or less in charge of the business and/or decisions?
Have there been any community groups developed for women and if so what impact has that made?
Why are some women reluctant to join?

Appendix B:
Vegetable Farmer Questionnaire
A. Background information
   1. Residential area: ____________
   2. County: ______________
3. Ethnicity

4. Part of a cooperative __Y__/N__

**B: Household Composition**

1. How many people and generations are in the household? ______________

2. Which member of the family is considered the head of household?
   - i. What is his/her age?
   - ii. What is his/her marital status?

3. How many sons and daughters do you have in this household?
   S:______D:______

4. Do any members of the family work outside of the community and send financial support?

5. Are there any activities or types of work that you do to bring in income for your family? What are they?

**C: Farm Operation Details**

1. Please tell me a little bit about the history of your farm.

2. 

3. Do you/have you always owned the land? How many hectares are you operating on?
   - Owned:
   - Rented:

4. Do you feel this is adequate land for you to meet your goals? If no, what would you do with the extra land?

5. 
   - a. What are the primary crops grown on your farm for sale?
   - b. Do you have a garden that you consume produce from, if so, what is grown in it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. Please rank how easily you are able to obtain reasonably priced fertiliser for your crops:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Really easy</th>
<th>Fairly easy</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Impossible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5b. Do you have access to or use subsidised fertiliser?

6. In the last year, have you made any investments into your farm, and if so what? (examples, more labour, new implements, amendments to the land, etc)

**D: Farm production and business roles**
1. Who would you say is primarily in charge of the following stages of producing your main crop used for household income?^4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plowing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizer application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation (from farm to road)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record keeping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating prices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving payments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the bank for loans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the bank for savings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Are there aspects of production that men/women are discouraged from doing^5?

3. Are there aspects of production that are hard for you because you are a woman/man? What is an example of such a task?

4. How does your household become aware of market prices?

5. What are the most common expenditures for women and men?

6. In what way do you help your neighbours and do they help you?

7. What do you think makes an entrepreneur?

**E. Information on Seed Crop**

---

^4 This section adapted from: USAID, FIELD Report No. 11: Gender and Value Chain Development: Tools for Research and Assessment, Tool A (pg. 4-5)

^5 The remainder of section D adapted from: USAID, Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains, November 2009.
1. What are characteristics of “good seed”? What are your customers looking for when they purchase your product?
2. How often are you able to fill their requests? How often do you have too much or not enough?
3. Does your household experience food shortages during the year? And if so, what do you differently during that time?

G. Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All weather road:</th>
<th>Market:</th>
<th>Gathering or sorting station for seed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do your goods reach the market?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| How easy or difficult is it for you to take your goods to the market? |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Impossible               | Very difficult  | difficult          |
|                          | Average         | Easy               |
|                          | Very easy       |                    |

Who would normally take your seed to market?

G. For women involved in training

1. What drove you take part in this training?
2. What changes have you seen from your participation in this training? (skills, income, exposure, awareness, confidence?)
3. Have these changes translated into increased decision making? Changes in your notions about yourself? Others’ notions about you? Your social status?

H. Personal Characteristics of Respondent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Age:</th>
<th>2. Sex (circle):</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Marital Status: Married</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Highest Educational Attainment:</td>
<td>No formal education</td>
<td>Primary school (level):</td>
<td>College/University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other training (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Occupation (Please indicate your occupation and income)
   a. Full-time: Monthly Income:
   b. Part-time: Monthly Income:

I. Do you have any other comments you would like to add?