Understanding the role of women home-based workers in large cardamom and allo value chains in Nepal

The World Bank’s South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation Program (SARTFP) emphasizes on generating and sharing knowledge on ‘what works’ in promoting women’s economic activity. A recent brief highlights the following key findings:

- High profit margins in cardamom and increasing demand for allo are creating new opportunities and attracting more women home-based workers.
- Women home-based workers are involved primarily in the earlier stages of production that are strenuous and less profitable, but not in the later more lucrative stages of marketing and trade.
- Removing barriers—including inefficient production processes, lack of access to and training on improved technologies, absence of strategies to reach wider markets, and insufficient access to finance—will help to ensure that women home-based workers can reap the benefits from the expanding cardamom and allo market.

For further details, read the brief here.

A joint survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF shows growing incidents of labour exploitation in forms of forced labour, bonded labour and child labour. Key findings include:

- Prevalence of labour exploitation with 6,229 (3.5 percent) workers in forced labour among the 176,373 manual labourers in brick factories (including family members)
- 34,593 children (between ages of five and 17) are living in brick factories
- Children account for approximately 10 percent (17,738) of total workers, and 96 percent of these working children (17,032) were identified as being in child labour
- 46 percent of the workers are Indian migrants
- Rolpa, Rautahat, Dang, Kailali and Sarlahi are the top five source-districts of Nepali brick factory workers
- Only 4 percent of workers were aware of the current minimum wage rate

Full report available here

Global Trafficking in Persons Report: Nepal's scenario

A recent global report on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) published by the United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC) highlights Nepal's efforts in countering trafficking in persons - particularly legislative provisions and actions taken. Excerpts from the report:

In 2020, Nepal concluded the process of accession to the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol (Palermo Protocol). The current legislation on trafficking in persons does not cover all forms of trafficking indicated in the Protocol. Provisions related to slavery and trafficking in persons are found at chapter 17 of the Criminal Code, which prohibits hostage-taking and kidnapping for the purpose of trafficking and enslavement. In addition, chapter 17 of the Criminal Code criminalizes forced labour, sexual exploitation and torture. In 2018, 629 persons were brought into formal contact with the police and/or criminal justice system because they were suspected of, arrested for or cautioned for trafficking in persons, of which 463 were males and 166 were females. In 2019 number of trafficking in persons cases have been reported as 258.
Impacts of Tobacco Use in Nepal

A joint study by Nepal Development Research Institute (NDRI), Nepal Cancer Relief Society (NCRS) and Cancer Research UK has meticulously examined the diverse impacts of tobacco use in Nepal. Some of the alarming findings from the study include:

- Estimated financial loss of approximately NPR. 39.25 billion (USD $334 million) in 2020 – approximately 1.5% of the country’s GDP. However, NDRI thinks this is an underestimate as costs related to smokeless tobacco or non-health care costs such as transportation or time spent by caretakers and family members are excluded.

- In Nepal, an estimated 48-69% of health costs in general are covered by individuals. Government of Nepal only provides NPR 100,000 as treatment support only available to certain patients from deprived family backgrounds, eligible through the Bipanna Nagarik Kosh (Deprived Citizens Fund)

- A study among 103 patients suffering from tobacco-related cancers found that the mean cost of treatment for patients and their families was NPR. 981,370 in 2019. Direct medical costs comprised almost 73% of this sum, with the indirect costs of wage loss and absenteeism making up the remainder. Of these patients, only 14% of patients were able to meet the cost of treatment on their own, with 16% selling their land or buildings, and 27% borrowing money from relatives.

- Cancer patients undergoing treatment and survivors are often left unable to work due to health impairments. Hence cancer and heart disease patients are at especially high risk of mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety due to physical inability. Patients with chronic diseases often report that low self-esteem and persistent stress leave them psychologically vulnerable.

More details about the report available here.

Corruption in Nepal: A decade's trend analysis

Based on the figures of the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) scores, which Transparency International publishes every year, here is the decade’s trend of the corruption in Nepal from 2004 to 2020. Corruption has increased from 22 points to 33 points over the 10 years.

Details about the figures here.
What has motivated you to conducting research in the ICT sector?
I did my bachelor in Computer Science, Masters in Information Technology and currently pursuing PhD in Learning Analytics. So, I am from the ICT background and I believe digital technology is the need in the entire world which has motivated me to work further in the field of ICT. My academic background and my passion in contributing something in digital technology innovation motivated me to conduct research in the ICT sector. Now, I have my own research lab named as "Digital Learning Research Lab" at my university. I like to do research in collaboration with various agencies and share the research findings to different parts of the world.

What are the specific areas you are interested in writing/publishing?
My research interest areas include Data Science, Educational Data Mining, Learning Analytics, Human Computer Interaction and Artificial Intelligence.

You have been writing and publishing journal articles in the ICT sector consistently. What have been your major lessons and achievements?
I was a part of the team who developed Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) system for the first time in Nepal. I am a part of the project which strengthen the digital ability of the school teachers for the teaching learning process. I am also associated with a project which deals with enhancing the capacity of school leaders though ICT. I am mentoring a research project which will improve the working system of property registration system of Nepal through the application of block chain. I worked as Project In-charge of the community education project at Kathmandu University, which concentrated on mobilizing students to several rural communities of Nepal. Organizing ICT related trainings and projects was also one of the major objectives of this project. I am supervising several masters and undergraduate students conducting research projects on ICT.

Any recommendations or tips for students/early career researchers interested to write and publish articles in the ICT sector?
The field of ICT has a great potential for the overall development of our country Nepal. So I suggest the interested enthusiasts to conduct research projects which can bring some positive interventions in the existing system of Nepal and convert that work into publishable papers. In this way, you are able to contribute in the development sector and share your research findings. I suggest everyone to adopt the concept of lifelong learning. Learning process should never stop despite your age, career and positions. Learning habits improve your understanding and skills.

Follow Sushil and his work in this webpage.