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Case Study

Peoples' Perception on Decentralized Agri Service Provision at Local Level: A Case of Lamjung District, Nepal

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Abstract

Perceptions are the attitudes of people which are considered as critical components of socio-cultural context. Decentralization promotes equity, people's participation and effective service delivery at the local level through transfer of responsibilities and competencies, capacities and resource allocation power to a lower level of government. This also implies in the agricultural sector. In this context, a research was designed to study the attitudes of extension workers and farmers on decentralized agriculture service system in 3 Municipalites and 3 Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Lamjung district. Using by stratified proportionate sampling method, we selected 60 respondents, out of which 41.67 percent were the farmers and 58.33% were the extension workers. Five point Likert scales were developed to measure perception regarding four major components of decentralization. Qualitative as well as quantitative data were analyzed. Focus Group Discussion was also conducted to identify the problems. The result showed that, regarding the planning component, fiscal component and implementation component majority of respondent perceive positive response, while the perception of structural component was found varied response. Further findings indicated that there was lack of clear ideas on well functioning of process among extension workers and farmers. Moreover, result showed that implementation related was the 1st ranked problem followed by financial related and structural related. Structural change to address increasing farmers' demand was one of the key interventions suggested by the respondents for the effectiveness of decentralized agriculture service provision.

Keywords: Decentralization; Extension worker; Farmers; Likert scale; Perception

Introduction

Perceptions are the acts or faculty of perceiving or apprehending by the means of senses or of the mind. They are the attitudes of people which are considered as critical components of socio-cultural context so as in agri-extension decentralization process. Decentralization refers to the allocation of fund, resources, and responsibilities from the central government to other lower bodies including the intermediate and local government bodies or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector. Decentralization promotes democratization, equity, people's participation and effective service delivery at local

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level through transfer of responsibilities and competencies, capacities and resource allocation power to a lower level of government (Jaishi et al., 2013)). Presently, decentralized provision are highly necessary in every sector so as in agricultural. The agricultural decentralization helps for the transfer of all heterogeneous services that includes all the tangible, non-tangible and non-storable goods that are provided to the agricultural producers in order to increase their productivity.

There are different types of decentralization. The broad categories of true types of decentralization are Fiscal decentralization, Political decentralization, Economic decentralization and Administrative decentralization. Decentralization polices help in organizing the functions of both macro and micro agencies at horizontal level and thus, providing them to establish relationship with vertical institutions of the society.

Nepal has gone to the Federal system, but still is in the process of implementation. Nepal was divided into five development regions, 14 zones, 75 districts, 3915 VDCs and 58 municipalities (Sah et. al., 2010). On Mar 10, 2017 government of Nepal has adopted 744 local body systems fulfilling the requirement of the new constitution of Nepal 2015. Presently, there are 263 municipalities in Nepal. There are three types of municipalities in Nepal, metropolitan city, sub-metropolitan city and municipality. In March 2017, after the report by the Local Level Restructuring Commission, the country was divided into 4 metropolitan cities, 13 sub-metropolitan cities, 246 municipalities and 481 rural municipalities. Two sub-metropolitan cities, Biratnagar and Birgunj, were upgraded to metropolitan cities on June 1, 2017, taking the number to 6 metropolitan cities and 11 sub-metropolitan cities. All old 75 district development committees (DDC) are also replaced by new 75 District Coordination Committee (DCC).

Similarly in the field of agriculture also, government of Nepal (GON) has already made devolution of agriculture extension service to local government in line with local self-government act 1999 (Dahal, 2006; GoN/MOAC 2007). The agricultural extension and research helps to increase the peoples participation in technology programs as well as to make the programs more accountable (World Bank, 2000). Agricultural extension services are under increasing pressure to become more effective, more responsive to clients, and less costly to the government (Bird, 1994).

Decentralizing extension is very important in Nepal as agriculture is the mainstay of the Nepalese economy – it contributes about 36 of the national GDP and employs over 66 of the economically active population. The majority of the rural population, over 83, resides in rural areas relying on agriculture and agriculture-related enterprises for their economic progress and food security (MoAD, 2012). The agricultural sector in Nepal, however, is neglected in terms of financial inputs, human resources, and program planning and management. In general, decentralized, demand-driven, and participatory programs tend to be more democratic in design and are more successfully implemented. Recent decentralization efforts are taking place in a context of re-conceptualizing and re-structuring extension approaches in Nepal, and generally acknowledged that supply-driven extension should be abandoned for demand-driven approaches that are more responsive to farmers' needs The ministry of Agriculture development is responsible for managing the agriculture service delivery in Nepal. Ministry of Agriculture development has control over Department of agriculture (MOAC, 2010). The objectives are being practiced up to the agriculture service center (ASC). Government has adopted various institutional arrangements for service delivery to provide public goods and services to the farmers (OECD, 2008)

Method and Materials

According to the research matter Lamjung district was choosen as an interested area. Out of which 3 municipalities (Besishar, Sundarbazar, Rainas) and 3 VDC's (Archolbot, Chiti, Khudi) selected and then literature review was done. It was conducted from January to May 2017. Five point Likert scale was selected for the perception study. Likert scale measures the level of agreement and disagreement of respondent at different level. Firstly, different statements were prepared.

Stratified proportionate sampling method was selected as a sampling technique. 60 respondents (farmers (41.67 percent) and extension workers (58.33 percent)) were selected for the survey sites. The primary data and information were collected through interviews with key informants, farmers and focus group discussion during the field survey at the local level. Secondary data was taken from DADO, DDC, LSDO relevant reports. Data were entered in SPSS. It was analyzed and interpretation was done. In this way report was prepared.

Result and Discussion

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The total population of sampled farmers and extension worker were 60, out of which 25 were progressive farmers who were listed in Lamjung Profile, 2072 published by DADO and LSDO, 10 were JT/JTA, 5 were from DADO and DLSO, 5 from DDC, 15 were from VDC/ Municipality. With these regards, we can say that there were 33.33 percent were from non-agricultural sector and 66.67 percent were from agricultural sector. From agricultural sector 62.5 percent were farmers and remaining 37.5 percent were agricultural extension workers.

In case of farmers, area of production and income level seems not much related. It is due to the types of commodity

production. 12 percent were involved in vegetable production; 12 percent were involved in fruit production. Similarly, farmers are engaged in livestock (40 percent), composite (8 percent) and other commodity (28 percent) production.

Most of the farmers (40 percent) have the income range of 2 lakhs to 4 lakhs. Only 12 percent of the farmers have the income higher than 6 lakhs. Table 1 also shows that 4 percent of farmers have more than 40 ropani land holdings. 64 percent of farmers have hand holding of up to 10 ropani (Table 1).

Most of the farmers were found known to the services provided by DADO/LSDO. 88 percent of the farmers were found to take the services from DADO/LSDO. Services were of different types like materials (40 percent), materials and technical (44 percent) and advisory services (4 percent). 12 percent said that they did not get any services from those offices (Fig. 1).

Perception Analysis

Introductory Parameters

Two introductory parameters i.e. hearing of decentralized agri-service provision and source of hearing were identified and were asked to the respondents. Result was found in varied nature.

Hearing of Decentralized Agri Service Provision

The population with in whom the statements were provided, most of them showed positive response. 20 percent of extension workers were found very frequent hearing of agriextension decentralization, 25.71 percent were found frequent hearing 38.28 percent were found occasionally and 17.14 percent were found rarely and 2.85 percent were found never hearing of decentralized agri-service provision term (Fig. 2). Similarly, in the case of farmers 4 percent were found very frequent hearing, 8 percent were found frequent hearing, 28 percent were found occasionally hearing, 40 percent were found rarely hearing and 20 percent of the farmers were found untouched with the term. Although government and other non-governmental organization are working in the field, many of the farmers (20 percent) who are listed in profile prepared by the DADO (Lamjung) and DLSO (Lamjung) are unknown about the decentralization process (Table 2).

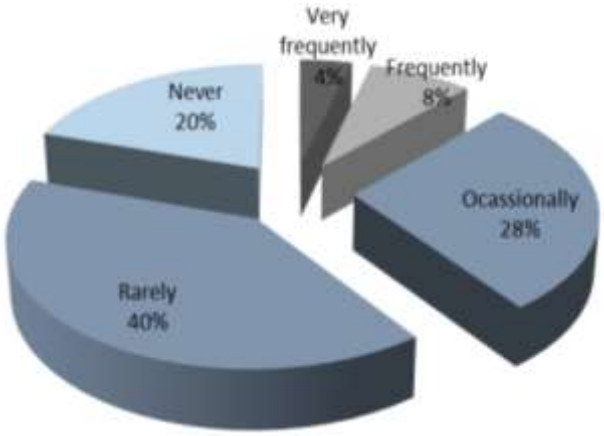

Fig. 2: Hearing of Decentralized Agri-Service Provision by farmers in Lamjung, 2017

Table 1: Cross tabulation of area of production and annual income

Area of production	Annual income				
	up to Rs.200000/-	200001-4000000 (Rs)	400001-600000 (Rs)	600001-800000 (Rs)	Total
up to 10 ropani	6	6	3	1	16
10-20 ropani	1	1	0	0	2
20-30 ropani	2	1	0	0	3
30-40 ropani	0	1	0	2	3
40+ ropani	0	1	0	0	1
Total	9	10	3	3	25

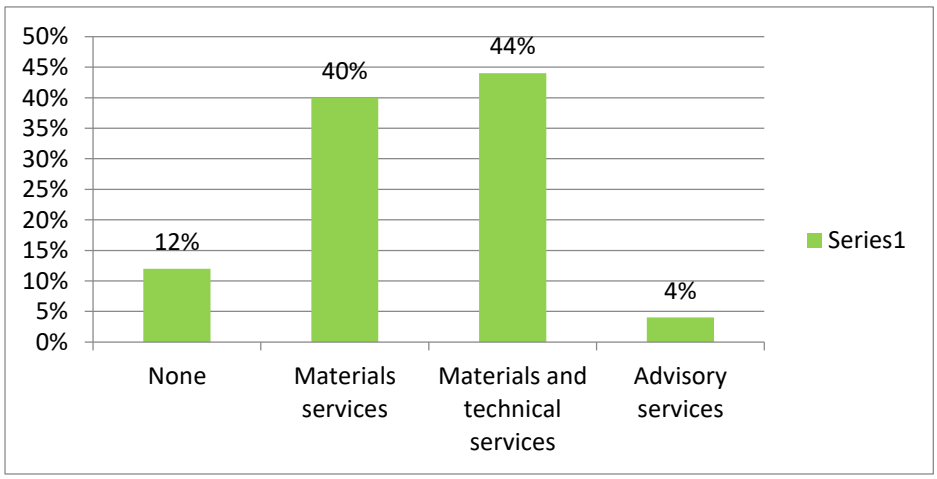

Fig. 1: Types of services taken by the farmers from DADO/LSDO in Lamjung, 2017

Table 2: Hearing of decentralized agri-service provision by extension workers in Lamjung, 2017

Introductory parameters	N	Extension workers' level of disagreement to agreement					
		Very frequently (%)	Frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)	Total (%)
Hearing of decentralization	35	20	25.7	34.3	17.1	2.9	100

N= Number of respondent

Source of Hearing

Most of the extension workers (97.1 percent) and farmers (80 percent) were found hearing the term of decentralized ari-extension term. 25 percent of the farmers heard the term from agricultural offices, 4 percent heard from neighbors/friends, 68 percent heard from mass media and 15 percent heard from developing agency. None of the farmers were found hearing the term decentralized agri-service provision from teachers/scientists. In the case of extension workers 31.7 percent heard from mass media and 2.9 percent only heard from developing agency (Fig. 3 & 4). By the result it can be said that mass media has been an effective means in conveying the information to the farmers and extension workers.

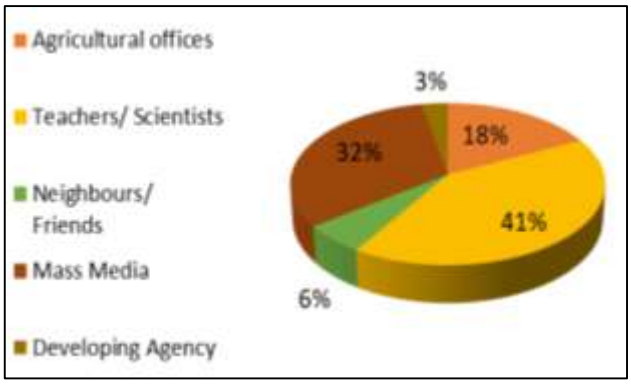

Fig. 3: Sources of hearing of Decentralization by Farmers in Lamjung

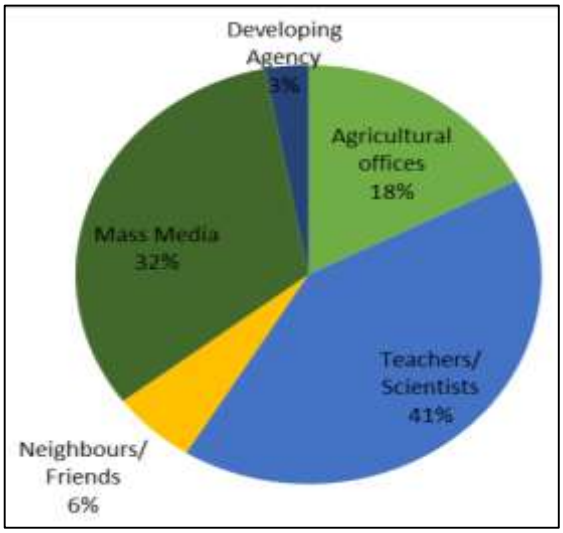

Fig. 4: Sources of hearing Decentralization term by extension workers in Lamjung, 2017

Planning Process

Planning is the starting phase of any project. Similarly, decentralization process also starts with this phase. Different parameters were identified in the sense that what can be the positive and negative effects of decentralization in planning process. Those parameters were asked to the respondents (extension workers and farmers). Parameters were Farmers' participation can be increased, utilization of traditional knowledge, effective mobilization of farmers groupand otheractivities can be planned and teaching Learning process becomes easier. Most of the respondent showed positive response in this component (Table 3 & 4).

Perception on structural components

As compared to other component's parameters, this showed more negative response. Farmers and extension worker are not satisfied with the present structure. According to them, present structure has to be changed (Table 5 & 6).

Perception on Fiscal Components

Varied response was found in the statements of Fiscal components. Extension workers and farmers are also not satisfied with present fiscal status. The budgeting, subsidy transparency, expenses were kept as major parameters in this component. In this component, most of the respondent showed varied response (Table 7 & 8).

Perception on Implementation Components

Implementation is final stage of a plan which is followed by monitoring and evaluation. There were different parameters were identified in this section and various result was obtained. But in general, in this component most of the respondent showed positive response (Table 9 & 10).

FGD Result

FGD was conducted within the farmers only. Problems were identified and ranked According to them they have not felt the effective decentralized agricultural service provision. Farmers found different related problems in this process. As the process involves major five stages (Planning, Structure, Fiscal, Implementation and monitoring and evaluation), they ranked implementation related as 1st problem followed by financial related and structural related (Table 11). It clearly signifies that plans are made but they are not implemented to the targeted sites or the farmers' field.

Table 3: Perception level of farmers in different planning parameters in Lamjung, 2017

		Farmers' level of disagreement to agreement					
Planning parameters	**N**	**1(%)**	**2(%)**	**3(%)**	**4(%)**	**5(%)**	**Total (%)**
Farmers' participation can be increased.	25	5	0	0	36	64	100
Utilization of traditional knowledge	25	0	12	4	48	36	100
Effective mobilization of farmers group	25	0	0	4	44	52	100
Other activities can be planned	25	0	4	12	56	28	100
Teaching Learning process becomes easier.	25	0	0	4	52	44	100

N= Number of respondent, 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

Table 4: Perception level of extension workers in planning parameters in lamjung, 2017

		Extension workers' level of disagreement to agreement					
Planning parameters	**N**	**1(%)**	**2(%)**	**3(%)**	**4(%)**	**5(%)**	**Total (%)**
Farmers' participation can be increased.	35	0	0	0	14.3	85.7	100
Utilization of traditional knowledge	35	0	5.7	0	45.7	48.6	100
Effective mobilization of farmers group	35	0	0	0	65.7	34.3	100
Planning of related activities and programs	35	0	5.7	2.9	71.4	20	100
Teaching Learning process becomes easier.	35	0	0	2.9	60	37.1	100

Table 5: Perception level of farmers in structural parameters in Lamjung, 2017

		Farmers' level of disagreement to agreement					
Structural parameters	**N**	**1 (%)**	**2 (%)**	**3 (%)**	**4(%)**	**5 (%)**	**Total (%)**
Formation of AFEC as the provisions of LSGA 2055/LSGR 2056.	25	12	40	36	12	0	100
Proper dissemination of power and resources.	25	0	0	0	80	20	100
Structure is made at right position	25	40	24	8	28	0	100
Decentralization process needs to be changed.	25	0	0	12	20	68	100

Table 6: Perception level of extension workers' in structural parameters in Lamjung, 2017

		Extension workers' level of disagreement to agreement					
Structural parameters	**N**	**1 (%)**	**2 (%)**	**3 (%)**	**4 (%)**	**5 (%)**	**Total (%)**
Formation of AFEC as the provisions of LSGA 2055/LSGR 2056.	35	8.6	11.4	8.6	51.4	20	100
Proper dissemination of power and resources.	35	0	0	0	80	20	100
Structure is made at right position	35	14.3	8.6	31.4	42.9	2.9	100
Decentralization process needs to be change.	35	5.7	0	0	54.3	40	100

Table 7: Perception level of farmers in fiscal parameters in lamjung, 2017

		Farmers' level of disagreement to agreement					
Fiscal parameters	**N**	**1(%)**	**2(%)**	**3(%)**	**4(%)**	**5(%)**	**Total (%)**
Helpful in budgeting	25	0	4	16	72	8	100
Facilation with the subsidy	25	0	8	4	76	12	100
Transparency in fiscal sector	25	0	4	12	68	16	100
Invested in the development of agricultural sector	25	12	24	16	32	16	100
Costlier process	25	0	12	12	52	24	100

Table 8: Perception level of extension workers in fiscal parameters in Lamjung, 2017

		Extension wokers' level of disagreement to agreement					
Fiscal parameters	**N**	**1(%)**	**2(%)**	**3(%)**	**4(%)**	**5(%)**	**Total (%)**
Helpful in budgeting	35	0	5.7	8.6	57.1	28.6	100
Facilation with the subsidy	35	0	0	5.7	51.4	42.9	100
Transparency in fiscal sector	35	2.9	8.6	11.4	65.7	11.4	100
Invested in the development of agricultural sector	35	8.6	8.6	22.9	51.4	8.6	100
Costlier process	35	0	0	5.7	65.7	28.6	100

Table 9: Perception level of farmers in implementation parameters in Lamjung, 2017

Implementation parameters	**N**	**Farmers' level of disagreement to agreement**					
		1(%)	**2(%)**	**3(%)**	**4(%)**	**5(%)**	**Total (%)**
Easier in implementation of plans and services	25	0	0	4	72	24	100
Agricultural services are taken to the targeted areas	25	0	0	0	76	24	100
Management is done according to the government's rules	25	16	0	20	52	12	100
Provision of monitoring and evaluation	25	0	0	4	56	40	100
Increase in Rate of farmer oriented program	25	0	4	0	76	20	100
Utilization of local resources	25	0	0	0	80	20	100

Table 10: Perception of extension workers in implementation related parameters in Lamjung, 2017

Implementation parameters	**N**	**Extension workers' level of disagreement to agreement (%)**					
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Total**
Easier in implementation of plans and services	35	0	8.6	0	40	51.4	100
agricultural services are taken to the targeted areas	35	0	0	2.9	54.3	42.9	100
Management is done according to the government's rules	35	2.9	5.7	8.6	42.9	40	100
Provision of monitoring and evaluation	35	0	2.9	0	34.3	62.9	100
Increase in Rate of farmer oriented program	35	0	0	0	57.1	42.9	100
Utilization of local resources	35	5.7	8.6	2.9	60	22.9	100

Table 11: Pair wise ranking on problematic phase of decentralized agri-service provision

	Planning Process (1)	**Structure (2)**	**Financial Provisions (3)**	**Implement ation (4)**	**MAE (5)**	**Total**	**Overall Ranking**
Planning Process (1)	*	2	3	4	1	0	5th
Structure (2)	*	*	3	4	2	2	3rd
Financial Provisions (3)	*	*	*	4	3	3	2nd
Implementation (4)	*	*	*	*	4	4	1st
MAE (5)	*	*	*	*	*	1	4th

MAE= Monitoring and Evaluation

Summary and Conclusion

This survey was conducted in 3 Municipalities and 3 VDCs of Lamjung district. Data were collected from both the farmers and extension worker to know their perception regarding decentralized agri-service provision. This chapter includes the summary of the research and conclusion derived based on findings.

The result showed that, regarding the planning component, fiscal component and implementation component majority of respondent perceive positive response, while the perception of structural component was found varied response. The findings indicated that as compared to the extension workers most of the farmers were still unknown with the term decentralized agri-service provision. The result also showed that mass media has been one of the most

effective sources for conveying the information to the local level or farmer's level.

Problems were identified and ranked by the Focus Group Discussion. It showed that in the process of decentralized agri-service provision implementation phase is the most problematic phase and the least problem is in planning process. With this result it can said that plans are made but they are not implemented to the farmers' field.

Due to top down approach of decentralization, the existing governmental structure was not able to provide the demand based program and support to the farmers' group. Result shows that there is high need of bottom to top approach. Structural change has to be done to address increasing farmers' demand as the effective extension decentralization process is highly necessary for the better agricultural production and to upgrade the living standard of farmers.

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