A multi-dimensional perspective on women’s empowerment through MUS

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Selingi, Dadeldhura district
Women farmers’ perceptions on empowerment (=shashaktikaran in Nepali)

Someone who gives her opinions and suggestions can be considered empowered. Nirmala is an example. She is educated and working. She is able to discuss and decide. I do not feel empowered but I am able to make decisions in my own household.

Empowered women have a good and supportive family, they are respected and know their rights.

Empowered is someone with land, who does farming. Someone who helps a lot, invites us and tells us what she has learned.

...education, awareness, understanding, having an opinion. They can tell what to grow and how much to plant.
The concept of “Empowerment” is…
“the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability” (Kabeer 1999: 436)
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Kabeer (1999)</td>
<td>Resources (material, human, social resources as pre-condition for choice, “power to”)</td>
<td></td>
<td>RELATIONAL</td>
<td>“tell us what to grow”</td>
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<td>Agency</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agency (“power over” decision-making process)</td>
<td></td>
<td>“supportive family”</td>
<td>“discuss and decide”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Achievements (well-being outcomes)</td>
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Research question

How can improved water access through MUS address the multiple dimensions of women’s empowerment?
The project “Anukulan”

Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) Programme (DFID funded)

Objective: Developing climate resilient livelihoods for local communities through public-private partnership for 500,000 poor people in Western Nepal that suffer from climate extremes and disasters

Project partners:

Led by:
Field sites in Doti and Dadeldhura districts, Far West of Nepal

**Village Selingi – 4, Samajee VDC**
- Coordinates: 29°21’46” N 80°34’56”
- Elevation: 1530m
- Total HH: 65
- Dalit HH: 9
- Chettri HH: 59

**Village Tiltali, Latamandu VDC**
- Coordinates: 29°17’39” N 80°49’39”
- Elevation: 620 m
- Total HH: 190
- Dalit HH: 46
- Chettri HH: 145

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Methods

In-depth interviews

Focus Group Discussions

Empowerment Ranking Exercise

Village Resource mapping
Findings in four dimensions of empowerment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dimension of Empowerment</th>
<th>MUS relevance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Resources</td>
<td>water access, income, ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Critical Awareness</td>
<td>...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Agency</td>
<td>...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Achievements</td>
<td>nourishment, health, food security, hygiene, financial security...</td>
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→ Who has when, where, how and why access to water?
1) Resources: Access to water

The water reservoir tank (70,000 l) in Selingi, Dadeldhura
17 registered communal taps for 45 households; around 29-35 mobile private pipes flexibly connected to valves (“pipe cutting”)

→ Water for domestic use and kitchen gardening 8 months a year
→ Dalit households have direct water access as they share 4 of these taps
Water supply challenges in Selingi, Dadeldhura

Problem 1: Pipes get washed away during monsoon, repair takes 15 days

Problem 2: Leakages in connections

Problem 3: Reduced water pressure through additional pipes from tab

Problem 4: Running pipes and broken tabs

17 registered tabs + 17 additionally made tabs

Uniting agriculture and nature for poverty reduction

www.iwmi.org
The Naula in Selingi, Dadeldhura
Water access to Tiltali VDC, Doti district
Water sources used in Latamandu, Doti
Both villages are exposed to floods covering fields, irrigation canals and naulas during monsoon due to prior deforestation.
2) Critical Awareness

Womens group – voice, knowledge, networks, access to finance, respect

“We women tell men to repair the water connections!”

“…they used to discourage me and tell me ‘aren't you ashamed of yourself for speaking up when males are there’. Now they don't say that but it used to be like that before.” - S_I4H

“…if they say thuli bhayeki (too clever) or (…) neta (politician) then how will anyone want to speak up or attend any programs.” - T_I4M

→ Changing gendered norms on speaking
→ How can these explicitly be addressed to ensure multi-dimensional uptake of MUS?
3) Agency: Women’s domestic and men’s outside space?

- **Reproductive space (Female)**
  - Child care
  - Taking care of the elderly
  - Cooking
  - Fetching water
  - Cleaning the house
  - Doing the dishes
  - Washing clothes
  - Discussing and chatting with neighbors

- **Productive space (Male)**
  - Irrigating
  - Selling
  - Digging
  - Fishing
  - Ploughing
  - Harvesting
  - Transplanting
  - Applying fertilizer and pesticides

- **Leisure time**
  - Resting
  - Sleeping
  - Bathing
  - Playing cards and gambling
  - Pooja and religious activities
Uniting agriculture and nature for poverty reduction

Changing division of labor and double work burden through migration

**Productive space**
- Milking cows
- Feeding livestock
- Drying clay and cow dung
- Fishing
- Harvesting
- Transplanting
- Applying fertilizer and pesticides
- Irrigating
- Selling
- Digging
- Fishing

**Reproductive space**
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**Leisure time**
- Resting
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**Notes:**
- Male responsibilities: productive activities
- Female responsibilities: reproductive activities
Changing division of labor and double work burden through migration

**Produc1ve space (Male)**
- Milking cows
- Feeding livestock
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- Taking care of the elderly
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- Leisure time

**Leisure time**
- Playing cards and gambling
- Leisure time
3) Agency: Decision-making at household and community level

...depends on the household position and family support:

→ gender, age and the position in the household (e.g. daughter-in-law, mother-in-law) are empowering factors

“...that is the most important. You need your family to let you attend these trainings.” - T_I3M

“...that too they didn’t send me on their own I had to ask them to send me. They didn’t send me saying who will do the house work if I'm away... So I said why did you give birth to me then they sent me.” - T_I3M’s daughter
4) Achievements: Individual, household, collective empowerment?

Those who plant are independent, hardworking, don’t depend on husbands, they do not have time to talk with others, no quarrels, in groups they learned how to grow (Tiltali FGD Nov. 26th, 2015)
When I planted vegetables, I earned money, so we can run our home. Women work the most, so we can keep money, and not men. Men also work, and have money for alcohol. Women pay for stationary for school children. If women try to improve something, it will change. We are not behind men, we can bring children up, so we also have power. (Tulasi Balayar, Latamandu, Doti)
Multi-dimensional empowerment through MUS?

Empowerment is double-relational:
1) *Influence of household:*
   age and position within household, number of children, support of parents-in-law and husband
2) *Supportive individuals influencing collective empowerment:*
   sharing knowledge, benefits and skills with household and community

**BUT:** “False empowerment” = suppressive leaders because of sustaining positions within village based on intersections of age, gender, caste, class, and voice (mother-in-law, caste, income, outspoken/beating)
Multi-dimensional empowerment through MUS?

Who will benefit?
“Those who have voice will get into new project contracts and receive own tap” (Bhagwati 0526)

MUS is selective: who gets MUS might sustain power imbalances in villages by empowering those further who raise their voice first and already have better access to resources than others…

e.g. gender, caste (Dalits), age and the position in the household (e.g. daughter-in-law, mother-in-law) are empowering factors

Not everyone takes up vegetable farming…
…prior training through RDSC in Latamandu on vegetable farming with 21 participants, of which only 4 took it up → how to increase the number?
   → No time (work burden), no money, not enough people to support at home
   → trainings will develop only a few leaders who function as role models
Multi-dimensional empowerment approach to MUS

- addressing existing power relations in the village (caste, gender, age, class)
- addressing existing power relations within the household (parents-in-law)
- addressing those who are not outspoken enough to intervene
- including Dalits hit harder in water scarcity
- integrating (young) men to ensure they invest in farming
- using farmer’s knowledge of how to build MUS in such a way that it is protected from landslides
Thank you!

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