Livelihoods: Gender Inclusive and Equitable Sustainable Development in Barshong Gewog, Southern Bhutan

Lachu Man Mishra

Agricultural development in rural areas in Bhutan has been one of the top priorities of the Ministry of Agriculture. In the recent past, the introduction of technologies, access to roads, extension centres in villages, transportation facilities, and farmers' cooperative groups have added new dimensions to the Bhutanese vegetable farming system, particularly for small and marginal farmers in rural areas of the country. I have been collecting data for research on income generation from vegetable production and carried out a detailed household survey over one month in seven villages with a total of 146 households in Barshong gewog (block). Barshong gewog is in one of the southern districts of Bhutan; it covers a total area of 21.2 sq.km, approximately 3.3% of the district total. During the research, it became apparent that Barshong block is experiencing a tremendous migration of men to urban areas for work leaving women in the villages to take a major role in agricultural activities. The villages have been connected by a farm road close to 11 kilometres long since the end of 2010, and are now showing a shift in vegetable production from small scale to an income generating business scale. Five of the seven people from the gewog taking vegetables to Thimphu and Gelephu for sale are women. They are seen as a source of inspiration for other women in the villages, and also indicate the business opportunity for farmers focusing on vegetable and fruit production.