

# The Germany-CGIAR<sup>++</sup> Science and Impact Hub

## Research proposal:

### Title of your proposal:

Influence of gender roles on food sovereignty in rural community in Nepal: an intersectional inquiry.

### Summary:

(give a brief summary of your research proposal, maximum 250 words)

Agriculture is fundamental part of economy in Nepal, contributing to one fourth of GDP with approximately 60% population being involved (CBS, 2020) and it is dominated by women (Shrestha et al., 2023). The gender roles are highly skewed with women taking 6.3-6.6 times more agricultural work compared to men (Chhetri & Ghimire, 2023). But treating “Nepali women” as a homogenous group conceals the historically entrenched caste, ethnic and regional hierarchies which shape women’s lived experiences, rooted in caste system and enduring distinction between high-low-untouchable castes and those coming from hilly or plains (Tamang, 2009).

There is a gap in the intersectional gender analysis within agri-food systems. Hence, this study aims to address the systemic injustices and understand power relations in agri-food systems in Nepal using the frameworks of intersectionality, feminist agroecology and food sovereignty. The study focuses on roles and responsibilities in agriculture, access to resources and knowledge and decision-making processes related to food production. A qualitative case study will be conducted through interviews and participatory mapping. MaxQDA will be used for data analysis.

By providing an intersectional understanding of gendered power relations within agroecological systems, the research will contribute to development oriented agricultural research and offer insights relevant for gender-sensitive and inclusive food system interventions, aligning with the priorities of CGIAR.

### Introduction:

(Maximum 300 words)

The neo food systems often favor short-term profitability through intensive farming practices (Bliss, 2019; Taşdemir Yaşın, 2022; Turner et al., 2022). Jarosz (2014) claims the food security approaches promote transnational agribusiness by focusing on increasing production, meeting supply and demand targets, while food sovereignty emphasizes on the power relation in agri-food sysyem, local ecology and underlying causes on hunger and poverty.

Food sovereignty was coined by La Via Campesina (1996) which recognizes small-scale producers, indigenous knowledge, autonomy and diversifying communities and solidarity as the center for agri-food system. Although it promotes economical alternatives and critiques corporate dominance, it sometimes fails to recognize peasants, local farmers and initiatives; this can blur the critical differences between the economic actors and create the conceptual blind spots in the power relations within communities (Middendorf & Herzog, 2025).



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Agroecology is a movement and is based on the principle of working with nature by promoting functional biodiversity and nutrient cycling (Altieri, 2009; Gliessman, 2014). It challenges the conventional agricultural systems by valuing the knowledge of indigenous people and farmers alongside ecological science which shifts the knowledge authority to local actors and enables socially and ecologically adaptive farming practices (Pimbert, 2015). But the economic and epistemological contributions of women farmers usually remain in the background or even ignored (Trevilla Espinal et al., 2021).

Feminist agroecology address the systemic inequalities in food systems by integrating feminist principles into ecological practices to challenge the patriarchal structures while promoting environmental justice (Ume et al., 2026). Intersectionality describes how multiple social identities (race, sexuality, class, gender) intersect to shape power relations (Crenshaw, 1991). Through the framework of intersectionality, feminist agroecology and food sovereignty, this study examines how intersecting identities shape women's roles in agri-food systems and whether these dynamics empower or constrain their empowerment.

## **Objective and research questions:**

(Maximum 200 words)

### **Primary objective:**

To understand how gendered and intersectional power relations within agri-food systems shape pathways toward food sovereignty in rural Nepal.

### **Secondary objective:**

1. To document the gendered and intersectional patterns of labor and participation in key agroecological practices including seed saving, soil care, crop diversification and cooperatives.
2. To assess how the agroecological practices either empower or constrain women and marginalized groups in relation to food sovereignty goals.

### **Research questions:**

1. How are agroecological roles, responsibilities and forms of participation shaped by the intersections of gender, class, caste, ethnicity and marital status in rural Nepal?
2. How do these intersectional social identities influence agroecological practices like access to resources, knowledge and decision-making?
3. How do these intersectional agroecological relations influence food sovereignty outcomes, specifically in terms of autonomy, seed control and food related decision making?

## **Methodology:**

(Maximum 300 words)

### Research design:

Qualitative case study in a rural community in Nepal.

### Literature review:



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A structured literature review was done for informed conceptual framework and operate the key concepts like intersectionality, agroecology and food sovereignty. The databases like Scopus, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis and websites like FAO, La Via Campesina were used with keywords including *agroecology*, *food sovereignty*, *intersectionality* and *Nepal* to identify core analytical dimensions and formulate research questions.

#### Data collection:

1. Semi-structure interviews: 5 interviews across caste, class and gender groups
2. Participatory mapping: Net-Map will be used for mapping exercise to visualize actors, relationships and power dynamics within agri-food system.

#### Ethical consideration:

The study will follow established ethical principles. Participation will be voluntary. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to data collection with information on the purpose of study, methodology, expected duration and right to withdraw at anytime without consequences. The confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, personal identifiers will not be included in transcriptions or publications and pseudonyms will be used if needed. The collected data will be used securely and used for academic purpose exclusively.

#### Data analysis:

Qualitative thematic analysis will be used to analyze the data from interviews and mapping. Deductive and inductive coding will be done in MaxQDA. The research questions and conceptual framework will be used to develop deductive codes like labor roles, resource access, knowledge, autonomy. Inductive codes will be generated to capture contextual themes like socio-demographic attributes of participants including variables like gender, caste, ethnicity, class, marital status to enable **intersectional matrix analysis**.

**Food sovereignty outcomes** will be examined by comparing the criteria like autonomy, seed saving and decision-making experience across the intersectional groups. The patterns and differences in power relations in the agri-food system will be examined using the code matrices and comparative tools in MaxQDA.

#### Expected results and envisioned impact:

(Maximum 200 words)

A context specific knowledge on how social identities like gender, class, caste and ethnicity intersect to shape participation, access to resources and knowledge and decision making in the local agri-food system of Nepal will be generated at the end of research. The research will provide the empirical insights on the power relations in the agri-food system and highlight how these dynamics influence on the attainment of food sovereignty within the criteria of autonomy, seed control and decision making. Furthermore, the key enabling factors and constraints that affects marginalized farmers will be identified.

The envisioned impact from this study is to contribute to development oriented agricultural practices. The findings from the study can help to design more



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informed, inclusive and gender-responsive agroecological interventions by highlighting the differentiated experiences and needs among men and women farmers. The results can support CGIAR and IWMI to strengthen participatory approach to improve the target development programs and avoid generalized strategies. On a broader scale, the study aims to contribute to promote socially equitable and sustainable food systems by providing evidence-based efforts.

## **Work plan:**

(please give a monthly schedule of your activities during your research stay at the CGIAR<sup>++</sup>)

### **Month 1 (April): Orientation and research preparation**

- Introduction at IWMI and onboarding on the project.
- Review of IWMI research outputs.
- Refinement of research tools including interview questionnaires and participatory mapping tools in consultation with supervisors.
- Preparation of informed consent materials and ethical clearance procedures.
- Finalization of detailed fieldwork plan.

### **Month 2 (May): Pilot study**

- Pilot testing of interview and mapping tools.
- Revision of tools based on feedback.
- Identification and coordination with local partners and communities.
- Sampling and scheduling of interviews.

### **Month 3 & 4 (June-July): Fieldwork**

- Conduct semi-structured interview with farmers and key informants.
- Conduct participatory mapping exercise.
- Ongoing transcription and field notes, completion of qualitative dataset.

### **Month 5 (August): Data analysis**

- Coding and thematic analysis with MaxQDA.
- Discussion on preliminary findings with both supervisors.

### **Month 6 (September): Consolidation and reporting**

- Finalization of analysis and internal report presentation for IWMI.
- Integration of feedback, preparation for thesis writing and return to Stuttgart.

### **Thematic link to development oriented agricultural research:**

(Maximum 200 words)

This study focuses on sustainable food systems, social equity and smallholder and marginal livelihoods which makes it thematically linked to development of agriculture research. This study examines agroecological practices and food sovereignty through the lens of intersectionality and feminist agroecology which will address how social identities and inequalities shape participation, access to the resources and decision making. These insights are useful to design environmentally



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sustainable and socially inclusive development interventions, specially in the agri-food system.

This research will directly contribute to the ongoing debate on agroecology and how it builds resilient livelihood while addressing social and gender differentiation. The study will highlight the diverse experiences and constraints among women and men rather than treating farmers as a homogenous group. This is directly linked to develop gender responsive agriculture. Moreover, the participatory approaches used in the study can help strengthen local knowledge, enhance autonomy and support equitable access to resources.

To sum up, this study aligns to development oriented agricultural research by seeking to generate practical knowledge to improve food security, sustainability and socially just farming systems.

## **Thematic link to the hosting CGIAR<sup>++</sup> research program/project:**

(Maximum 200 words)

The major thematic link of the proposed study to IWMI's "Policy Innovation Science Program" is the focus of the research on generating evidence that can help creating the informed inclusive and equitable policy processes in agri-food systems. The research will produce context specific insights by examining the intersecting social identities that influence participation, resource access and autonomy which can be used in the food system transformation.

The findings from the study will be relevant to policy-oriented research that will seek to strengthen the inclusion of marginalized groups and address structural inequalities in the process of decision making. The program emphasizes understanding of governance arrangements and power relations, with the support of empirical data from rural communities, about the policies and interventions that are experienced on the ground level. My research will directly complement this aim of the program.

The study can contribute to ongoing efforts of the program to translate research into policy relevant knowledge through the engagement with researchers at IWMI. This will support designing socially responsive agri-food system policies and knowledge products.

## **References:**

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I hereby confirm to the best of my knowledge and belief that the information provided above is correct. Furthermore, I hereby confirm that no artificial intelligence was used to write the above proposal, and I am aware that any kind of deception may lead to immediate rejection of the application.

Stuttgart, 10.02.2026

Place and date



Signature

