



World News of Natural Sciences

An International Scientific Journal

WNOFNS 23 (2019) 69-74

EISSN 2543-5426

Food security status and coping strategies: A case study of Dalits community in Lamjung District, Nepal

Santosh Khanal

Institutes of Agriculture and Animal Science, Tribhuvan University, Lamjung Campus, Lamjung, Nepal

*E-mail address: sntkhanal1991@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

A case study was conducted at Madhyanepal Municipality, Lamjung, to assess the food security status and the coping strategy of Dalit community. Information was collected from the 60 Dalit households through livelihood analysis, problem ranking and community discussion tools of participatory rural appraisal. The research revealed that the majority of the households (46.875%) have food sufficiency for less than 3 months, as the figures for household food sufficiency for 3-6 months, 6-9 months, and 9-12 months are 31.25%, 6.25%, 15.625%, respectively. The research also showed that none of the households have year round food sufficiency. The major reason associated with this outcome was low land ownership (36%), followed by infertile land (28%), lack of manpower (20%), predators (12%), and diseases (4%). To become more food secure and in response to the food deficit condition, households have adopted coping strategies, such as share cropping, seasonal migration within or outside the country, remittances, casual laboring, selling off livestock, and borrowing food or money.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Dalits, Food security, Lamjung District

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant current issue in the economic and development is the food security and right to food in Nepal. Nepal ranks 142nd in the overall human development index, with 31 percent living below the poverty line and 24 per cent living with less than \$1 a day. Nepal with US\$ 470 per capita income is one of the 16 “hunger hotspots” in the world. Three and a half million people are considered to be moderately to severely food insecure, and 41% of the population is estimated to be undernourished. It is estimated that around 3.5 million

Nepalese people who represents approximately 16.4% of the rural population are at risk of moderate to severe food insecurity. Food security is worse in the mountains - 13 out of 16 mountains and 21 out of 39 hill districts are severe food deficit. The magnitude and depth of poverty varies across the region, with the highest in the mountains followed by the hills and remote areas, mid-western and far-western hills. Out of 24 districts of mid and far western regions, 19 are food deficit.

Food security has a direct effect on health, nutrition, and overall productivity of human being – Dalits, women and children in particular. The national average land holding is less than 0.5 hectare which is insufficient to feed an average family size of 6.5. Dalits continue to remain one of the most economically marginalised, politically excluded and socio-culturally oppressed communities in Nepal (Kabeer, 2006). Nepalese Government declared ‘untouchable free’ country but still humiliating and degrading practice of untouchability is remained in rural area of Nepal (Cameron, 2009, and Lamsal, 2012).

There is increasing concern that a majority of the people, particularly Dalit, women and other marginalized groups are falling into the hunger and the food insecurity. According to a survey report of National Dalit Commission Nepal, 74.14% of Dalit households are landless. Moreover, 50.03% of the Dalits, the highest population live in Ailani land (non registered). Land Reform Act 2021 seeks to make the farmers and the landless people ‘the owner of the land’. Their involvement, in the farming activities cannot contribute much to the condition of the food security in terms of the production and income because firstly, they lack the knowledge and skill of modern improved agricultural techniques to increase the productivity and income, and secondly they are landless (Adams, 2001; Alter, 1999; Burghar, 1984; Nordstrom, 1989; Parker, 1988; Stone, 1986).

Third Yearly Interim Plan (2064/065-2066/067) has accepted the food security as the fundamental aspect of human and also seeks for necessary policies and programmes to promote the food security like the accessibility of the food, the access to food, the utilization of food and food stability in Nepal.

The government has the plan focusing on Dalits. But, the case is reverse. Rights related to the food have violated by one hand or another. It indicates that the strategies and programmes need to review why they are ineffective. It does not matter to the formation of the implementation of the policies and programmes. The impact is significant, that is vacant over Dalits. Strategy and ways to increase the access to the programmes play significant role, which seems lacking to the stakeholders. This review was done to identify the food security and coping strategies especially indaliti community of Nepal.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Madhya Nepal Municipality of Lamjung district. The Dalit community of Samichautara was proposively selected as the universe of the study as majority of the Dalits reside in the cluster in Samichautara over the years. The study was conducted during 2016.

The research design of this study was case study. It has described the food security status of the Dalits community and the coping strategies they adopt to get their food secured. Semi structural Pre-testing questioner was used for survey purpose. 90 Dalit responded reside in that community was used. The data were tabulated and analysed using Ms.Excel.

2. 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below is developed to access to the objectives of the research, shown in **Figure 1**. Dalits are the poverty-stricken over the year which is the major cause of the food insecurity of Dalits in Nepal. Dalits live below the line of the poverty. Poverty has dominated Dalit community due to many reasons. Firstly, they are landless and marginal landholders. Secondly, they are illiterate/ uneducated and discriminated, based on the the existing caste system in the society. Based on these variables, the study has analyzed Dalits and has explored their condition of the food security in relation to the resources sharing and inclusion and the advocacy initiations.

As the solutions to alleviate the poverty and the vulnerability of the food insecurity, a wide range of the investment plays a crucial role in the agricultural sector to increase the production and productivity. Agriculture sector is considered as the backbone of the economy of Nepal and also very supportive to augment the food security. If the agriculture develops, it highly contributes the food security. Since the policies and plans are too powerful, it is necessary to formulate the necessary specific policies and plans in the case of the food security and the poverty, too. But, it requires proper and effective implementation on the behalf of the vulnerable communities like Dalits.

There is the need of the creation of the employment opportunities for Dalits to empower them economically. No doubt, the employment increases the income of Dalits and supports them to fight against the hunger and food insecurity.

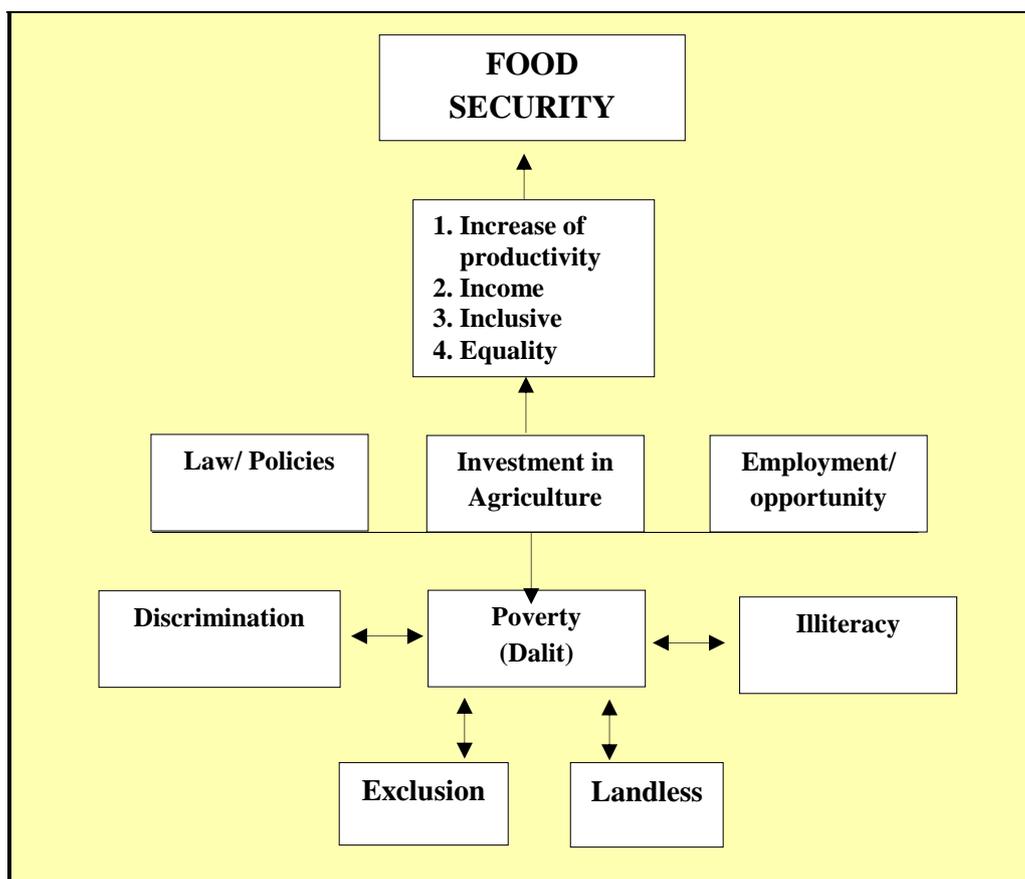


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3. 1. Food sufficiency status

The research revealed that majority of the respondents (46.8%) have food self- sufficiency for only less than 3 months. The food self-sufficiency of the respondent for 3-6 months, 6-9 months, and 9- 12 months were 31.2%, 6.3%, 15.6% respectively. It showed that none of the respondents have year round food self- sufficiency, as shown in **Fig. 2**.

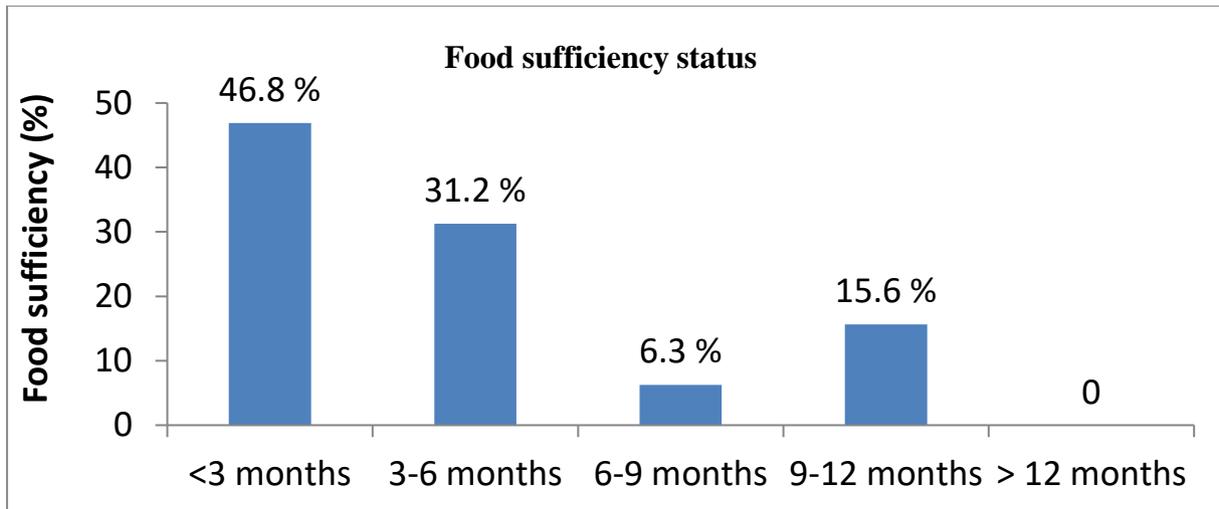


Figure 2. Food sufficiency status of the participants

3. 2. Root cause of food insecurity

From the problem ranking tool of PRA it showed that the root cause of food self-insufficiency was low land ownership (36%). Further, 28% of the participants found that the major cause of food self-insufficiency was infertile land with low productivity. The other causes were lack of man power (20%), predators (12%), and diseases (4%).

Table 1. Root cause of food insufficiency in the study area

S.N.	Problems associated with food insufficiency	percentage	Rank
1.	Low land ownership	36	I
2.	Lack of manpower	20	III
3.	Diseases	4	V
4.	Infertile land with low productivity	28	II
5.	Predators	12	IV

Source: PRA, 2016

3. 3. Food insecurity coping strategies

The key informant interview showed that the major food insecurity coping strategies among the Dalits community were:

1. Share cropping
2. Seasonal migration within or outside the country
3. Remittances
4. Casual laboring
5. Borrowing food and Money.

The major food insecurity cropping strategies was share cropping as most of the people in the community adopt the share cropping mechanism to get their foods, while some of the people seasonally migrated to India in search of job. Most of the household women go for casual labor during cultivation and harvesting of the rice and maize, while males go for construction works as labor. Remittance was another food insecurity coping strategy as some of the youths went to Dubai, Saudi, Qatar, and Malaysia.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study has explored the condition of the food security of Dalits with the areas of potentialities to improve. It is basically the in-depth analysis of their socio-economic condition of Dalits that influence the food security based on the qualitative and quantitative data of the primary and secondary source. In spite of a lot of the existing resources and Dalit prone policies and plans, Dalits have led worse life and suffered from the hunger and food insecurity. They have been excluded of the resources, services and the economic opportunities in Nepal over the years. The first cause is that there are poor and landless. The second is that the government is not sincere and responsible to execute the policies and the plans effectively in the case of Dalits. The distribution and utilization of the resources is injustice, unequal and exclusive for Dalits. Social and economic empowerment is must for Dalits in Nepal. For the vulnerable communities like Dalits who are landless, it is essential to increase the involvement of Dalits in the income oriented interventions, i.e. the micro-enterprises, the livestock rearing, the cooperatives. Most potential strategy is to increase in the access of the landless through the linkage building and the loan access from the micro-finance institutions (MFIs). Traditional occupations effectively increase their income and entrepreneurship, but still require modernizing for the livelihood. The condition of the food security of Dalits is worse.

References

- [1] N. Kabeer. Social exclusion and the MDGs: challenge of 'durable inequalities' in the Asian context, *IDS Bull.* 37 (3) (2006), pp. 64-78.
- [2] Mary M. Cameron. Untouchable Healing: A Dalit Ayurvedic Doctor from Nepal Suffers His Country's Ills. *Medical Anthropology Cross-Cultural Studies in Health and Illness* Volume 28, 2009 - Issue 3 Pages 235-267

- [3] H.B. Lamsal. Role of dalit civil society against untouchability: challenges and prospects. *Nepal J. Soc. Sci. Policy* 2 (1) (2012), pp. 75-84
- [4] Adams, V. 2001. The Sacred in the Scientific: Ambiguous Practices of Science in Tibetan Medicine. *Cultural Anthropology* 16 (4): 542-575
- [5] Alter, J. 1999. Heaps of Health, Metaphysical Fitness: Ayurveda and the Ontology of Good Health in Medical Anthropology. *Current Anthropology* 40: 43-66
- [6] Burghart, R. 1984. The Tisiyahi Klinik: A Nepalese Medical Centre in an Intracultural Field of Relations. *Social Science and Medicine* 18: 589-598
- [7] Nordstrom, C.R. 1989. Ayurveda: A Multilectic Interpretation. *Social Science and Medicine* 28 (9): 963-970
- [8] Parker, B. 1988. Ritual Coordination of Medical Pluralism in Highland Nepal: Implications for Policy. *Social Science and Medicine* 27: 919-925.
- [9] Linda Stone. Primary health care for whom? Village perspectives from Nepal. *Social Science & Medicine* Volume 22, Issue 3, 1986, Pages 293-302