ANNUAL PUBLICATION
Vol. 3, March 2020

Nepal Youth Journal

Youth Engagement and Volunteerism

ISSN : 2542-2782

Nepal Youth Journal

Youth Engagement and Volunteerism

Annual Publication Series

Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN)

Kathmandu

Nepal Youth Journal
Annual Publication, Vol. 3
ISSN: 2542-2782

Published By

Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN)
Publication Copies: 1000 copies

Supported By

VSO Nepal

Design and Layout

Ramesh Maharjan

NYJ is an annual peer reviewed research journal. It provides a forum for the publication of scholarly articles on significant issues related to youth. The editorial board encourages scholars to submit innovative works. Authors are responsible for the originality, concerns and contents of their articles. All enquiries are directed to the *NYJ* editorial board, YAN.

Contents

Young Generation towards Green Revolution in Nepal

Govinda Rizal PhD

Abstract

The role of Nepalese youths in agriculture are little understood and overtly underestimated. While out-migration of youth from villages to cities and abroad leaving their farms in the care of aged parents or nobody is sensitively overrated, the rise of young farmer-entrepreneurs from among returned migrants, who are introducing advanced farming techniques, owe a recognition. No study has analyzed the role of Nepalese youths in agriculture, in detail. The questions like 'what is the trend of youth's involvement in agriculture? Is it increasing, decreasing or the same?' necessitates research. In an attempt to address this, one hundred and twenty enumerators volunteered to find one farmer each and collect primary data. Primary data and information collected from field visits in all seven provinces, interaction with farmers, participatory approach, and secondary information from sources such as news media and social networking sites were analyzed. Analysis of data showed that during the last few decades the agriculture system has changed rapidly. Youth farmer-entrepreneurs whose products have a

dominant presence in local markets, as well as farmers exporting agri-products abroad, confirmed that there is clear evidence of youth active in agriculture focusing on high-value products. Although there has been no green revolution in Nepal, the rise in production and productivity of field crops in the last couple of decades was the result of a diffusion effect of green revolutions in neighboring countries. Should the present tendency of youth returning to agriculture sector with ideas and resources continue in the same trend, Nepal will foresee a green revolution in the 2020s decade.

***Keywords**: Brain-gain, farmer, green revolution, mechanization, youth entrepreneur*

Introduction

Working-age of Nepalese people is 16 to 60 years that spans the youths aged between 16 and 40 years (Government of Nepal, 2015). Nepalese youths in agriculture can be grouped into three broad categories. Youths in the first category are those who have inherited ancestral land from their parents or fore-parents. They carry on the traditional methods learned from their predecessors. They have both abilities and resources to carry out drastic transformation in agriculture. They need external inertia, guidance and exposure to begin the transformation in agriculture. The second category of youth works on other farmers' land. They follow the guidelines dictated by their owners. Their creativity is little respected, and they have neither an opportunity to manifest their potential nor to learn and implement big ideas. Youths in the third category

are those who have secured some resources to invest in a planned production system. Some of them had earned money working in other sectors and a few are returned migrants who had worked and acquired agricultural skills abroad. The individuals falling in this category are few and geographically scattered; thus, loosely linked with one another. They use the recent technologies on a 'trial and learn' basis. The potential and prospectus of this category of youth, majority of who are the subject of this study, are expected to be the pioneering force in the agriculture transformation.

Nepalese youth are fast to learn new ideas and adopt innovations. However, their economic situation compels them to retract from taking initiatives; they are perceived as spoilers, their contributions go unrecognized and they are often vulnerable to exploitation (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2018). They are fast to pick up new slogans as well as propaganda. Energy of such easily motivatable youths can be utilized in various modern agriculture sectors. They are ahead on trial of Agri-tourism and 'go-green' practices. They need a favorable environment, reliable market, and farmer supportive policies to retain their profession in agriculture sector.

In many countries, agriculture is not considered as a job for it brings in no periodic salary. It was true in the context of Nepal until recently. Nepalese youths were fashioned to believe that agriculture was for illiterates and laggards. This belief held the national economy captive in the hands of rural folks who could not make to industrial jobs or government services. The

situation has been changing fast. There has been a surge in entrepreneurial motivation in agriculture among the youth. These days, an increasing number of agricultural entrepreneurs are dignifying their presence in society. This change in perception is the product of the interplay of several resultant forces.

Phases in Nepalese agriculture

The evolution of Nepalese agriculture has three distinct phases. The first and the longest phase consisted of traditional agriculture practiced for centuries that became adoptive to the advantages of green revolution of 1970s and 1980s in neighboring countries. In Nepal, where agriculture transformations were yet to take place, the diffusion effect of the revolution had positive ripples in agricultural production and economics.

The second phase that started after the 1990s saw a rapid displacement of youths from farms and villages. The youth migrated either to cities for a safer and easier life or went abroad for higher wages and opportunities. In Nepal, a decade long conflict from 1995 to 2006 and long political instability made living in villages unsafe and unproductive for the people of working age. Back in the villages, farms were left under the weak management of aged and senior citizens who physically could not leave their homes.

The third phase started after the 2015 earthquake. Nepalese people living or working abroad got instigated to return to Nepal and contribute in post-earthquake rebuilding process. Many expatriates voluntarily repatriated. Back in the country,

they invested their skills and earnings in production areas including agriculture. There were government policies and programs supporting youths who had started agriculture entrepreneurship. They were supported with soft loans as well as partial to full grants. Such initiatives were aimed at triggering a revolution in agriculture. This research aimed was to find answers to the questions 'are the agri-entrepreneurs performing well to keep themselves on the farms as well as to attract others?'

Methods

The author assigned 120 students of a university as volunteer enumerators. Each enumerator was asked to find an economically rising farmer or an entrepreneur in his or her locality and take a short interview. Each volunteer had a few questions and limited time to extract quality information from the farmers-in-transition who were gearing up as successful entrepreneurs. The questions included farmer's name, age (those between 20 to 50 years), gender, number of family members, address, name of their enterprise, year of establishment of the enterprise and the commodities they are working on. Each enumerator asked the farmer his or her initial investment to start the farm or enterprise and the latest annual profit. Other information like farmers' educational background, subsidies, and grants they received from external sources were not asked. However, they were incorporated if the farmers mentioned such information without asking. Data and information were collected from field visits in all seven provinces, discussion with farmers, participatory approach, and

secondary sources such as news media and social networking sites. Relevant secondary data and information collected from government publications as well as news media and social networking sites were used to complement and verify the information collected from field visits. Data were compiled in CSV formats and analyzed using R. The statistics on gender, geography, investment, return and presented as graphs and figures were analyzed. Their challenges, success, and potentials were collected, some of which are presented here as quotes and success stories.

Was the rise in agriculture skewed to a certain group of people based on caste or ethnicity? To check the influence of the caste and ethnicity, the family (sur)-names were analyzed to find a homogeneity or heterogeneity of population rising as agriculture- entrepreneurs across the country.

Results

Information of 120 farmers was collected. After curation of data, ninety-six data sets that qualified stringent criteria were used for analysis; information of 26 farmers was either incomplete or outside the range of criteria and was removed. The survey-covered 96 farmers were heads of enterprises or farms. The respondents are from 31 districts and all 7 provinces.

Table 1: Number of Household Heads Interviewed and the Count of Corresponding District and Provinces

SN	Province	District	No. of Household
1	Province 1	3	3

2	Province 2	3	2
3	Bagmati Province	9	60
4	Gandaki Province	3	6
5	Province 5	9	19
6	Karnali Province	2	2
7	Far-west Province	2	4
Total	**7**	**31**	**96**

The maximum respondents were from Bagmati Province, where a total of 9 districts and 60 households were covered. Among the districts, the maximum respondents were from Kathmandu. This also relates to the fact that maximum number of households adopting advanced technologies are from Kathmandu.

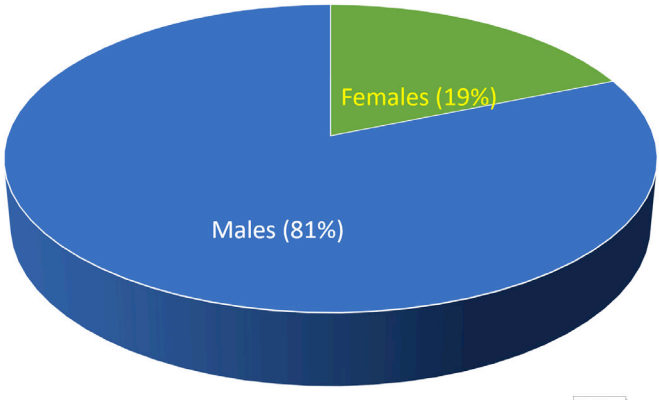

Figure 1: Percentage of Heads of Enterprise or Household Gender-wise

The respondents included 18 females and 78 males (Figure 1). At least 19 percent of the respondents were females who were head of the family or enterprise.

The sample weight is skewed towards positive in comparison to the national data. Nepalese women are rising as entrepreneurs (Dhungana, 2014). In 2019, there were 275,435 small and medium enterprises registered in Nepal (Bista, 2019); at least five percent were women-owned.

Interactions with 96 farmers revealed that youths in agriculture are successful as entrepreneurs. Despite problems of unavailability of inputs like seeds, fertilizers and technical assistance on time, the return from agriculture is higher than their expectations.

Based on the family names, it was found that not a single family-name was dominant in pioneering the agriculture transition.

The number of family names in the respondents' list included 5 Neupanes; 4 each of Khadkas, Pandeys, Poudels, Sapkotas, Tamangs; 3 each of Bastolas, Chaudharys, Gurungs, Shresthas, Subedis, Thapas; 2 each of Tharus, Aacharyas, Adhikaris, Awasthis, Bhattarais, Dangols, Dhakals, Gautams, KCs, Mijars, Tiwaris, Yadavs and 1 each of Aryal, Basnet, Belbase, Bhatta, Bishwokarma, Bista, Budhathoki, Chaulagain, Chhetri, Dhami, Dhungana, Ghimire, Hamal, Humagain, Kafle, Karanjit, Karki, Khaiju, Kunwar, Lama, Maharjan, Niure, Pun, Rai, Shahi, Sunar, Thakuri, and Timalsina (Table 2).

Table 2: The Respondents Based on Their Surnames

Family Name	**Count**	**Family Name**	**Count**	**Family Name**	**Count**
Acharya	2	Dhungana	1	Pandey	4
Adhikari	2	Gautam	2	Poudel	4
Aryal	1	Ghimire	1	Pun	1
Awasthi	2	Gurung	3	Rai	1
Basnet	1	Hamal	1	Sapkota	4
Bastola	3	Humagain	1	Shahi	1
Belbase	1	Kafle	1	Shrestha	3
Bhatta	1	Karanjit	1	Subedi	3
Bhattarai	2	Karki	1	Sunar	1
Bishwokarma	1	KC	2	Tamang	4
Bista	1	Khadka	4	Thakuri	1
Budhathoki	1	Khaiju	1	Thapa	3
Chaudhary	3	Kunwar	1	Tharu	3
Chaulagain	1	Lama	1	Timalsina	1
Chhetri	1	Maharjan	1	Tiwari	2
Dangol	2	Mijar	2	Yadav	2
Dhakal	2	Neupane	5		
Dhami	1	Niure			

There were 5 respondents with one family name Neupane. From those 5 Neupanes, they were one each from Argakhanchi,

Chitwan, Dang, Lamatar Lalitpur, and Godawari Lalipur. It showed that no single family-name dominated the pioneering agri-enterprises. The rise was spontaneous and nation-wide.

Case Studies

Success from livestock to flowers

Usha Aryal (33), a mother of two children is the owner of "Cheetanshil Cattle Farm" located at Banganga Municipality Ward No. 2 Kapilvastu. She started the farm in 2064 B.S. with two buffaloes gifted by her family and an investment of Nepalese Rupees 180,000. Twelve years later, (now) she owns 25 cattle that give on average 200 liters of milk per day. She earns on average Rs 300,000 per month and spends 50 % on cattle feed and care. She has a fodder field and also cultivates off-season vegetables like tomato, pea, bean, cauliflower, broccoli, etc. She has employed two permanent staff and gives jobs to dozens on daily-wage earners. She experimented on marigold cultivation. She cultivated marigold in 5 *katthas* (1690 m^2) with an idea of reducing dependency on the imported marigold flower during *Tihar* and other festivals. She earned Rs 120,000 from an investment of Rs 20,000 only. Inspired by the success of her first trial, she planned to extend her marigold cultivation to one hectare. She has a plan to expand her business, add cattle up to 100 and take the enterprise to the national level. Her farm is a model in her locality and Usha welcomes farmers- especially females- to visit, learn and copy from her success. She volunteers to teach them her secrets. (The information of this case study was collected by enumerator Bipin Aryal).

Banana farmers of Kailali goes commercial

Dipendra Tharu (29) of Tikapur Municipality of Kailali District situated in Far-west Nepal, left his sheep and cows rearing work for India in search of work in 2065. He had to support a joint family with low income. He saved IRs 2000 per month for three years. He returned to Nepal in 2068. Dipendra along with two partners started banana farming on 42 bighas (284,451 m^2) of land acquired on lease. He brought tissue-culture-derived plantlets of G9 variety of banana from Jag Gaun, Maharastra. His endeavor turned profitable. Today, Dipendra cultivates 10 hectares of land acquired on lease and earns Nepalese Rs 1,500,000 annually. He has invested in power tiller, power spray, and drip irrigation. He has plans to buy tractors, expand his cultivation area, train unemployed local youth and attract them to banana farming. He is happily engaged in his banana farm that has generated employment for 15 people.

There are challenges. He has limited access to fertilizer, seed, and technical services on time even after payment. Dipendra is a pioneer in banana cultivation in his locality and a model farmer of his community who teaches other farmers on voluntary basis. Through such social engagements, his family gained social and economic empowerment. He is a promoter of family and social harmony (The information of this case study was collected by ennumerator Gayatrri Phulera).

A farmer in Solukhumbu becomes a model

Janbu Rai (40) of Solududhkunda Municipality-06 Salleri, Solukhumbu is the owner of Krishneswori Krishi Farm established in 2070. Janbu Rai cultivates 7 ropanies (47408 m^2)

of rented land for which he pays NRs 50,000 as land rent annually. Annually he invests NRs 600,000 on the farm and makes a profit of Rs 400,000. Janbu Rai started farming six years ago. Janbu was planning to go aboard for employment, he was unsuccessful to get a visa, lost money that he had given to agents. His wife and two children encouraged him to work in the land. He took an agricultural loan of NRs 50,000 from Krishi Bikash Bank at subsidized interest to start his business. He received assistance from Agriculture Knowledge Center, Solukhumbhu. The officers of the center provided him training and his family supported him. He started his farm growing cauliflower, cabbage, chilly and squash. Now, he also grows Kiwi fruit along with vegetables. He employs one farmer in his field regularly to clean the field and to pick up the fruits. He sells his products in local weekly market called *Hatiya*, throughout the year. He has two cows as part of the household. They provide valuable manure. Now, he has a regular income of NRs 30,000 per month from agriculture and NRs 12,000 from the sale of milk and *Paneer*. He has become an expert in off-season vegetable farming.

Janbu knows very well that vegetable production depends on a range of factors such as weather, temperature, rainfall, and quality manure for the vegetables. He had participated in integrated pest management or IPM training programs from which he learned to use *jhol mal* (liquid fertilizer) and chemical pesticides on his vegetables and fruits in an appropriate amount, and time. He follows legal requirements he has to comply with when using chemicals. Farmers of Salleri visit Janbu's farm to learn the technique of agriculture and the use of

pesticides. “If anyone is interested to learn and observe farming from my farm, all are most welcome, and I give special preference farmers,” Janbu says (The information of this case study was collected by enumerator Babi Basnet).

The sample case studies show that farmers across the country are rising but as isolated cases. If and when the number of such farmers increases, there shall be a positive change in Nepalese agriculture. If that happens within a short time, there shall be a green revolution or a revolution in agriculture. However, initial investments have been problems for the youths to kickstart mega enterprises in agriculture.

Among the 96 farmers interviewed, Lokjan Tharu (29) of Karkado Banke started his enterprise with Rs 1500. Today, he is the owner of Banke Poultry Farm and makes a profit of Rs 250,000 annually. He lives in ward no. 9 of Banke District with his wife, two daughters and one son. 1000 layers and a hatching unit of 50 sq. m. His children go to boarding school in city while his wife helps him on the farm. Banke Poultry Farm is one of the leading poultry farms of Banke District which produces about 7500 eggs and 2500 chicks a month. In 2014 Lokjan went to Qatar intending to earn money to pay off loans and support his family. He was not paid enough. After returning from Qatar, where he worked for three years under harsh conditions, he was unemployed. Then he heard about training and workshop on rearing the layer chicken that was organized by Poultry Development Farm, Khajur, Banke. Since that day his family’s living standards have changed. He started with 15 chicks received as a grant from poultry development

farm. He reared those 15 chicks along with more fowls bought from the market in his backyard. Soon, he started selling eggs in the neighborhood. He also started to produce chickens from those eggs. “Then the price of one egg was NRs. nine and that of one chick was just NRs. 25. Now, I sell eggs at NRs. 14 each and chicks at NRs. 65 each,” he said. Now Lokjan has a big farm with thousand birds rearing in deep liter system. He also owns a small hatchery unit to produce chicks. From there, he keeps some for his farm and remaining he supplies to the farms in hilly region as per the orders. “Demand of chicks is high and is increasing in the hills,” he said. He adds, “It was not easy at first but officers’ regular visits and suggestions regarding the cage size, feeds and poultry diseases helped him reduce the mortality of birds.” He is planning to extend the farm with more 1000 birds and to add new hatchery with more capacity. He uses the litter in his kitchen garden and produces organic seasonal vegetables. Those vegetables are sold at weekly market- every Friday. He thanks his wife for supporting and helping him at this work.

Lokjan is a highly motivated person who says, “It only needs will power, dedication, and patience to work it out. You can earn with just a small effort in your own country.” He is a true inspiration and a volunteer mentor of the youths who want to start poultry farming (The information of this case study was collected by by ennumerator Romi Kunwar).

A successful student

Durgesh Kumar Yadav (25) of Hansapur, Rupandehi, Nepal started with Arambha Akikirt Krishi Farm with an initial

investment of Rs 30,000,000. Durgesh Kumar Yadav a student of B.Sc. Agriculture at Prithu Technical College cultivates 85 *bighas* of rented land. He pays Rs 800,000 land-rent annually. His annual average income is Rs 15,000,000. In 2068 B.S. he took a loan of Rs 30,000,000 from Mega Bank and other financial institutions. In 2076 B.S., Durgesh in coordination with Province 5 Government was, for the first time in the province, able to buy a PMR Block machine to produce feed to the livestock, mainly for buffalo.

The 25 years old youth cultivates black gram, sugarcane, groundnut, papaya, watermelon and has buffalo, goat, fish, etc. He employs 10 permanent staff and 100 other daily-wage workers in his field.

He explained that he has learned the techniques of off-season vegetable farming from training organized by various governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Kumar said, "The soil plays a big role in cultivating good vegetable farming." Local communities are taking him a community leader. He sells his products to nearby markets like Butwal, Bhairahawa, Manigram, and Suryapurva, as well as sends to Chitwan District. According to Kumar, there are many challenges which arise at some point in time like the problems of loans, agricultural inputs and market price. He also said that along with the challenges there is a huge potential to expand an agriculture enterprise along with the development of agriculture sector of Nepal. (The information of Durgesh Kumar Yadav was collected by enumerator Rishav Pandit).

The above case studies show that the agri-entrepreneurs have started earning at par with their counterparts in other sectors, if not more.

Discussion

Food is the first thing we need every day throughout our life. Farmers provide our first basic needs. Whether they are well-paid or ill-paid, whether they are cared or ignored, farmers have been the first and the last volunteers to support the human civilization and their role has the same spirit and importance. The involvement of youth in agriculture is a positive indication that the human community can continue their activities in peace and surety that they will have enough food in the future.

In Nepal, the youths are needed in and are pulled to all different sectors such as government, construction, development, tourism, business, trade, transportation, foreign employment, among many other sectors that their involvement in agriculture is feared reduced. The roles played by Nepalese youths in agriculture are neither recognized nor respected. Reports frequently appear in news media that the youth have out-migrated from villages to cities and abroad leaving the farms ("Youths And Agriculture," n.d.) in the care of aged parents or nobody. There are counter reports that mention the rise of young farmer-entrepreneurs from among returned migrants, who are introducing and using advanced farming techniques. Technology-savvy youths have also started to show their dominant presence in agriculture (USAID, 2019). The Nepalese youth are actively taking ICT to farmers. The youths look for comparative long-term advantages, ease of work and profitable

returns. At times they are attracted to profitable and celebrity sectors. During such times, the transformation within the agriculture sector lures the youth back to farms.

Nepal's agriculture evolution has three phases. First and the longest phase consisted of traditional agriculture practiced for centuries that since the 1970s and 80s became adoptive to the advantages of the green revolution in Nepal, where agriculture transformations were yet to take place. The second phase that started after the 1990s saw a rapid displacement of youth from farms and villages. The youth either migrated to cities for a safer and easier life or went abroad for higher wages and opportunities. In Nepal, a decade long conflict from 1995 to 2006 and long political instability made living in villages unsafe and unproductive for the people of working age. Back in the villages, farms were left under the weak management of aged and senior citizens who physically could not leave their homes. The third phase that started after 2015 is characterized by the reversal of the second phase. Now, the aware and skilled youth are returning to farms with skills, ideas, and plans of profitable enterprises. They invest in advance technologies, fine quality seeds of high yielding varieties, and rigorous marketing.

Will there be a green revolution in Nepal?

There has been no green revolution in Nepal. The first green revolution took place in many developing countries between 1966 and 1985. The period witnessed the development and cultivation of high yielding cereals supported by increased use of chemical and organic fertilizers. In the past five decades from 1950 to 2000, the population doubled, the extension of

agricultural land was by 30 % yet the production of cereals tripled (Pingali, 2012). The increase in food production proved the popular Malthusian theory of population and food production (Dunn, 1998) wrong. The period when food production surpassed the population growth was celebrated as the first green revolution (Pingali, 2012). The impact of the Green Revolution was direct on poverty reduction and in lowering the food prices. The improvements in crop productivity came from the germplasm improvement of CGIAR centers and adoption and dissemination. Knowledge and practice were transferred to national agricultural programs (Pingali, 2012). The gain in the productivity from the germplasm improvement only was annually 1%, 0.8 %, 0.7%, 0.6% and 0.5 % for wheat, rice, maize, millet, and sorghum, respectively (Evenson & Gollin, 2003). The high yielding modern varieties were swiftly adopted in countries with high population growth (Herdt & Capule, 1983).

The peaceful era after the devastating Second World War saw a boom in the population. The population growth was more than food production. There was a fear of famine and death. The fear was redeemed from the development of high yielding cereals like rice and wheat. The baby boom was supported by the Green Revolution. Everyone had enough food to eat.

As there was never a green revolution in Nepal except for the quiet ones (Awal, 2015), food production increased from the adoption of modern elite crop and animal varieties, improvement in management practices and increase in production area. The food production increased but at a slow

pace. Then, there were a series of political and economic instabilities in Nepal, that compelled the people of working age to leave their farms for safety or a change. Youths distracted from agriculture due mainly to political instability, a decade long insurgency and foreign employment, are gradually returning to farms. The number of such returnees is small but qualitative in terms of investment ability, innovativeness, and learned skills. Youths new to agriculture-based enterprises need insulation from the fear of failure and bankruptcy. Fluctuating market prices, prevalence of disease pest and natural calamities are a few major fears. The invasions by imported food commodities often make the new entrepreneurs withdraw from competitions. Other factors include deaths and accidents leading to critical injuries or family members. Otherwise, agriculture is more resilient than other sectors in the long run.

The youths in farms are earning better than, if not at par with their counterparts in many other sectors. They have resorted to mechanization and are making their lives easier to live in the farms, than ever before. Should the present farmer-friendly peaceful environment and positive attitudes from stakeholders continue to support the farmers, Nepal will soon experience its first green revolution. The youth and volunteer farmers need constant encouragement for it.

Future

Today, the farmers are no longer confined to traditional subsistence farming. They have knowledge and skills to make agriculture competitively productive and sustainably profitable. The youths with low initial investment or new to the farms

must start with short duration high-value enterprises such as beekeeping, horticulture, poultry, rabbit rearing (Kioko, 2019). Once they are accustomed to rain and soil, they should upgrade themselves and their enterprises taking long duration as well as mechanized enterprises such as grapes, citrus, olive, and nut tree cultivation.

Conclusion

Farmers are seldom recognized as volunteers in society. What would be the cost of making a non-farmer elite to enter a farm clean hays to dungs, spread night-soil to fertilizers? Our farmers have been doing such jobs to provide food for humanity and charge the minimum for their efforts. This unrecognized volunteerism of our farmers needs a deeper realization. Youths who are in a dilemma between blue- and green-collar jobs need guidance to take up entrepreneurship. Young entrepreneurs need insulation from the price fluctuations and invasions by imported goods. The agriculture that was drudgery for ages is transforming it through mechanization. The youths back in the farm need support, encouragement, and motivation so that they produce enough food for themselves and the rest of us. They have the potential and we need them now and forever.

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Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN) is a movement-based youth organization dedicated to protecting and promoting youth rights though advocacy, campaigns and capacity development. Initiated by energetic and vibrant youth, it is registered in Kathmandu District Administration Office (DAO) and Social Welfare Council (SWC) in 2013. YAN is one of the leading advocacy organizations working in the field of youth development. Our thematic focus areas include education, disaster risk management, climate change, employment, entrepreneurship, gender, and social inclusion.

VSO has been in Nepal since 1964 and currently implementing its programmes in 25 districts of five Provinces. Currently VSO Nepal programme focuses on Education, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Health Education, Youth, Livelihoods, Gender & Inclusion, Governance, Climate Change and Resilience. Through Volunteering for Development (VFD) approach VSO aims to be more responsive to and actively engaged in supporting disadvantaged groups.

युथ एड्भोकेसी नेपाल (यान)
YOUTH ADVOCACY NEPAL
2013

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