



**EDUCATE THE CHILDREN  
NEPAL**



## **From Day Laborer to Entrepreneur-Employer! Som Laxmi's Story**



*Som Laxmi Thami on her farm. Photo by S. Basnet*

Som Laxmi Thami, age 48, lives in a remote, isolated, and mountainous area of Dolakha District, ten hours or more east of Kathmandu by car. She is married and has three daughters and a son.

Som Laxmi received virtually no formal education as a child. Because of her lack of education and her family's lack of money and social standing, she was severely limited in what she could do to earn money as an adult, relying heavily on inconsistent and very low-paid wage labor. Her husband worked at construction sites when masonry work was available.

Her family owned a small parcel of land on which they used to grow mostly corn and millet, along with a very limited quantity of seasonal vegetables. Food insecurity and lack of proper nutrition were facts of daily life for them. She recalled that they would sometimes pick and cook nettle leaves (*sisno*), "but most of the time, we ate corn powder soup...with *dhindo* (a cooked cornmeal dough)." Traditionally, nettles, corn, millet, and dhindo are food for very poor people, and they offer very little in the way of either adequate nutrition or dietary variety.

***Her own and her family's life would change dramatically for the better when ETC began working in her village in 2014.*** She joined Gurans Women's Group, participated in our basic literacy and numeracy classes, gained agricultural skills and resources through our practical training opportunities, and eventually became an original shareholder of Sabda Udeshya Women Saving and Credit Cooperative when it was founded in December 2018 by combining Gurans and five other women's groups.

She took a loan of 50,000 Nepalese rupees (NPR; currently US\$364) to build a vegetable cultivation tunnel. After repaying that loan, she took out and repaid two additional loans to build more tunnels, in which she grows tomatoes, cucumbers, bitter melons, and radishes. Her husband now works full-time with her on their farm, and they employ 15 seasonal workers. From sales of their vegetables, they now earn NPR 580,000 (US\$4,227) annually, which is quite a lot of money in rural Nepal.

### ***YES! I want to support women and families in Nepal!***

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ETC initially provided Som Laxmi with one goat; they now have seven, and also raise buffalo, pheasants, and chickens. By selling chickens, goats, eggs, and ghee, they can earn an additional NPR 55,000 (US\$401) annually.

They are currently supporting two of their daughters who are pursuing their educations in Kathmandu and Charikot (the main urban area in Dolakha) and have financially supported the wedding festivities for two of their children. Even after covering all expenses, they still manage to save NPR 100,000 (US\$728) annually — a truly remarkable feat, especially considering how many families in rural Nepal must still subsist on that amount or less!



*Som Laxmi feeding her goats. Photo by S. Basnet*





Som Laxmi credits this success to her having participated in ETC's useful and effective programs. According to her, *"I never thought vegetables could grow on this barren land...but now I farm commercially — thanks to the skills I learned through [ETC's] activities."*

Participation in ETC's programs has enabled thousands of women like Som Laxmi to transition from wage labor and subsistence farming to entrepreneurship — with market farming, small stores, and food/tea shops being the most common business ventures. They have improved their economic and social status, personal confidence, and independence. Their children can attend school instead of either never going or dropping out early to work or marry very young. They have boosted their families' food security and nutritional intake.

***In short, participating in ETC's programming has been transformational —  
thanks to the support of friends like you!***

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