

# Socio-economic Conditions and Participation in FMIS in Nepal

-Managed by Indigenous and Migrant Community-

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Increasing agricultural productivity is crucial in reducing poverty and promoting food security in Nepal, for which irrigation is an essential entry point. The irrigated agriculture contributes with nearly 40% of the total world food production, though it occupies 20% of the total cultivated land. Yet only 43% of the country's net cultivated area is irrigated, and their productivity remains low due to inefficient system operation (ADB, 2008 Agriculture, Natural Resources and Social Services Div, SARD). The new CSP for Nepal recognizes critical importance of improving the performance of existing irrigation systems and expanding access to irrigation, with effective integration to agriculture and livelihood support services. In this context, there is a significant scope for enhancing rural livelihoods by improving irrigation access to poor marginal and small holders with community-based and/or private minor irrigation. This study was aimed describe the socio-economic characteristics, of water users of the selected systems, process of organization formation, participation, and leadership development of WUAs and determine factor affecting water availability in the selected systems. The irrigation systems for study are from the eastern Chitwan located in the East Rapti River Basin (ERRB). They are either small or medium in size. Few of these systems are still operating and managed by the indigenous Tharus, despite the increasing domination of migrants. A sample of about 20 percent of the total households was selected proportionately and randomly, besides the inclusion of all the concerned WUAs. Hence, the sample size of the systems was 100 consisting of 40 and 60 households from indigenous and migrant irrigation systems, respectively. The research on based on data collected 2008 March-April. Results shows that the water users of irrigation systems managed by the indigenous still have lower level of awareness and knowledge on historical events of irrigation systems and organization formation is due to the low level of education and lack of interaction with the outsiders. Geographical fragility was perceived to be the most serious factor limiting water availability because most of their farms are acquired by covering forests and are prone to erosion and landslides. While indigenous water users perceived that flooding/silt deposition limit water availability on their farms because they are located downstream of the ERRB where the eroded soils coming from upstream are deposited quite often. Finally, the communities differ in socio-economic characteristics such as family size, education, farm size, income and so on because of difference in culture, traditions, ability, and resource endowment.