

Field Report

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With this field report I will share some personal experiences and afterglowing memories of the two-month field stay in Nepal. First I must admit, that I had been a bit hooked on experiencing new cultures and getting new ideas on my reality before I started the journey to Nepal. Thus I could not wait to get on the road again and explore what the life of the smallholder farmers and the encounters with them will be like. In the middle of March 2014 we arrived in the capital city Kathmandu, where the coordinators of SAF-BIN Nepal at Caritas Nepal cordially received us. In the following days, we quickly approved that the capital city is a challenge for all senses. Not only the stunning Himalayas, temples and food made a contribution to this conclusion, but also the signal-horns, reams of motorbikes, piles of rubbish... But for all that new impressions, there was time left to thoroughly discuss the scope and nature of the project with the SAF-BIN team. Also, we mutually decided on the research areas *Bardiya* and *Kaski* and arranged transport and translation.

After this starting period of orientation, we – Romana (our supervisor), Berni and Christina (a.k.a. goat ladies), Andrea and me accompanied by Chintan from SAF-BIN – started our journey to the west. In Pokhara, Nepals third largest city and starting point of various trekking routes, we got to know the Caritas staff of the district (DPOs¹ and VRAs²) and specified together the research plan. From here on, our translator Dinesh, who took care of

our safety at the same time, would be our indispensable companion for more than five weeks.

By conducting our test interviews with farmers in a village near Pokhara, we

The travel route: Vienna-Kathmandu-Kaski (Pokhara)-Bardiya (Kalika)-Kaski (Pokhara)/Dhikurpokhari-Kathmandu-Vienna

got some first insights in the farmers' life. Shortly after, Andrea and me discovered together with our driver and Dinesh, the region and culture beyond the touristic map and started the adventurous journey to Bardiya. Located in the mid-western-region in the Terai plains, agricultural production is affected by water scarcity and the increasing unpredictability of rainfalls such as increasing extreme events. After a two day journey, which gave us an understanding for the scenic variety and the necessity of excellent driving skills to survive on Nepalese roads, we finally reached our first research area. Although the hot climate and mosquitos gave us a hard time, farmers' and Caritas' hospitality and interest for our work compensated for that immediately. In the following weeks, we were busy conducting



interviews, observing group meetings and field trials initiated by SAF-BIN project.

¹ District Programme Officer

² Village Research Assistant

Trials with wheat varieties and irrigation systems serve to better understand how to deal with changing climatic conditions. Farmers – both old and young, men and women – gave us an understanding for the project and its meaning in their everyday life. In the evening the three of us were busy writing down experiences of the day, discussing and reflecting the impressions and planning the next day in our cosy housing above the Caritas Office. Time passed quickly, and soon we finished our research and launched our travel back to Pokhara. On the way, we visited Lumbini, which is known as the birthplace of Gautama Siddharta and which is to that effect a spiritually important center.

Kaski, with its main city Pokhara, is located in the Annapurna region and is much more touristy than Bardiya. Alpinists, such as nature lovers and flower children from all over the world, come f.e. to experience the impressive environment or to make spiritual experiences. In terms of agricultural conditions, the climate in the hilly region is ranging from subtropical to warm temperate. Besides potatoes, rice, maize, wheat and seasonal vegetables belong to the main crops. Respectively, vegetable trials such as



tomato tunnel trials play an important role in SAF-BIN project sites of this area.

With the management of humidity and temperature an increase in tomato production is expected.

In addition to the fieldwork, I experienced the Himalayas when I went hiking at the Mardi Himal Trek: this was breath-taking in the truest sense of the word.



The stay ended in back in Kathmandu, where the successful data collection process and the formed connections to new friends were celebrated.

Overall, the field stay in the two regions was an adventurous, insightful and enriching experience, which would not have been feasible in this way without the Caritas Nepal team and the farmers. By means of their great support and cooperation, I was able to successfully collect data by interviewing 22 farmers, 11 Caritas team members, observing group activities (group meetings and field trials) within SAF-BIN. On top of that, the Caritas team gave us an understanding for culinary, social, ecological, historical and economic conditions, which shape the Nepalese society.



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