

Case Story #: Farmer Transformed to Guru Kisan

Rong Rural Municipality of Ilam District introduced Guru Kisan initiative in 2024; subsequently the Municipality selected and appointed 121 farmers Guru Kisan, meaning “Agriculture Teacher” for various agriculture sub-sectors. Mr. Ram Prasad Acharya is one of them for vegetable sub-sector.

Mr. Ram Prasad Acharya, aged 45, a permanent resident of Marse Simle village of the Rong Municipality, was Chairperson of the Water Users Association (WUA) of Simle Malbase irrigation project funded by Small Irrigation Programme (SIP) in 2021. He underwent various training organized by SIP, such as Local Resource Person (LRP), post harvesting, Business to Business (B2B), etc. Mr. Ram was qualified as GURU KISAN according to the robust criteria of the ‘Guru Kisan Procedure-2024’ enforced by the Rong Rural Municipality. The key criteria were 1) permanent residence in the Palika at least last 5 years, 2) entrepreneurship occupancy in at least one sub-sector of agriculture since last 3 years, 3) willingness, ability and commitment for transferring skill, knowledge and technical know-how to other farmers.

Since December 2024, Mr. Ram has been working as Guru Kisan for the Cardamom sub-sector. His major occupancy over the last ten years are Cardamom cultivation and Livestock rearing in the village. He has acquired in-depth skill, knowledge on Cardamom cultivation and hence the Rong Local Government (LG) has appointed him as the Guru Kisan for this sector. Since his recognition by the LG as Guru Kisan, he has been resource person for helping other farmers on soil test, preparing manure, providing improved seeds, planting and transplanting, weeding, harvesting, post harvesting, processing and linking to potential market vendors.



Photo 1: Mr. Ram Prasad Acharya, working on his cardamom farm at Malbase Irrigation Project, Ilam

He also cultivates cardamom on his land, including leased plots. From cardamom sales alone, he earns approximately NPR 1,300,000 (CHF 8,000) per year. In addition, he sells various livestock, generating about NPR 200,000 (CHF 1,250) annually. Ram supports his family of nine with this agricultural income, covering both household expenses and his children's education costs.



Photo 2: Mr. Ram Prasad Acharya, cleaning the raw cardamom

While he is financially stable with the agriculture and livestock produce, he has earned a reputation and recognition from the farmers and LG.

He has been assisting and facilitating around 30 farmers in his village. As per the Guru Kisan Procedure, he is entitled to receive various mandatory trainings and exposure visits from the local government, as well as opportunities to participate in production programs, value chain initiatives, and other LG-level activities.

The Rong Local Government regularly consults and invites him for advice on agriculture and livestock-related policies, skills, knowledge, and technical know-how. It also engages his services to facilitate Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions forward-level farmers' groups, covering technical agricultural practices and behavioral topics.

The official handbook for Guru Kisan is a ToT manual titled '*Commercial Vegetable Production*,

Post-harvest Mobilization, and Market Management', developed by the Small Irrigation Programme (SIP) and Sahaj under the National Agriculture and Market Development Project (NAMDP), and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in 2023. SIP had also introduced '*LRP Mobilization Guidelines – 2023*' to various local governments. Interestingly, Rong LG adapted this model and developed its own Guru Kisan Procedures – 2024.

Ram shared his experience with us; saying "My life has been changed after getting irrigation service in my farm land. After the irrigation system built with support from SIP, production of cardamom has significantly increased, which becomes benchmark for my Guru Kisan journey. Now my social reputation has been increased. I am socially active and getting opportunity to participate in social events, Guru Kisan's Network meeting, LG's various meeting and events, etc. Relationships with Rong Rural Municipality has been being very strong."

The Guru Kisan concept is rapidly expanding in all the wards of Rong Rural Municipality. Prime Minister KP Oli during his recent visit of Jhapa District also had a mention and praised the concept for its role in boosting agricultural productivity.

From being an ordinary farmer, Mr. Ram has transformed into a Guru Kisan through a local government initiative, establishing himself as a recognized and dignified farmer. His story is a powerful example of how SIP's Local Resource Person (LRP) model was adapted and scaled up by local government into the Guru Kisan initiative-building on the foundation of year-round irrigation services provided to farmers.

