



SPOTLIGHT ON RESILIENCE

Although 80 percent of Nepalis work in agriculture, two out of every three suffer from food insecurity. Crop yields and earnings remain well below international standards, with agriculture making up just 35 percent of GDP.

Nepal is exposed to numerous geological and hydro-meteorological hazards, most prominently earthquakes, floods, landslides, windstorms, hailstorm, fires, glacial lake outburst floods, and avalanches. The country is ranked 11th in the world for vulnerability to earthquakes and 30th for flood risks. The combination of exposure to multiple hazards and vulnerability of the population in Nepal means disaster risk can pose a severe threat to national development.

Nepal is ranked the 14th most vulnerable country to climate change worldwide. It also has the largest concentration of glaciers outside the polar region, with Himalayan peaks that provide water to some 1.3 billion people in South Asia. Climate change is responsible for erratic and decreased availability of water and higher temperatures, lower crop production, flooding, and landslides. Climate change is a risk multiplier—drastically increasing the threats to biodiversity and people, particularly the most vulnerable.

CONTEXT



Photo: Fungma Fudong | USAID

A riverside in Chitwan district of Nepal

KEY USAID PARTNERSHIPS TACKLING RESILIENCE

Targeting one million food-insecure Nepalis, USAID's Feed the Future initiative works to sustainably improve agricultural productivity and nutrition. USAID helps farmer households obtain high-quality seeds and credit; learn improved farming techniques; connect to markets; and improve nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, especially among women and children under 5.

USAID and the U.S. Department of Defense work closely with the Government of Nepal and other donors to build national capacity to prevent, mitigate and respond to disasters, particularly the threat of an earthquake in the Kathmandu Valley. USAID and the U.S. Department of Defense also train first responders, increase public awareness of what to do in a disaster, and ensure that key medical and transportation facilities can withstand a major earthquake.

USAID works through the Global Climate Change initiative to reduce threats to Nepal's vast physical and biological diversity by protecting critical bio-diverse forest areas covering over a third of the country and supporting livelihoods that do not threaten forests and other natural resources. USAID also helps communities in those areas develop local plans for adapting to climate change by reducing the risk of landslides, using mobile technologies to warn of forest fires and other disasters, adopting new tools to capture and conserve water, and changing planting and harvesting to align with new rainfall patterns.

RESILIENCE

USAID is helping vulnerable communities build resilience to global threats such as pandemics and climate change, while building local capacity to scale impact and sustain progress.



Photos: Kashish Das Shrestha | USAID

IMPACTS

In Nepal's priority forest regions, such as in villages adjacent to forests like Farm Tole of Banke district and Kumroj of Chitwan district, USAID funding has installed more than 2,500 biogas plants in the last two years alone. Each biogas plant helps reduce the amount of carbon emissions by four tons per year. Biogas plants also reduce the time families spend cutting down trees and the amount of harmful smoke they breathe when cooking.

In communities where climate change threatens water availability, USAID is installing solar-powered water systems that can be used within households and on farms. These systems allow farmers to use drip irrigation for high-value crops, increasing their annual household income by about 37 percent. The water systems also reduce the time women spend collecting water by an average of three hours a day, giving them more time to cultivate nutritious vegetables that improve family nutrition and can be sold at high prices to supplement household income.



Nepal's ability to prevent epidemics depends on consistent availability of critical drugs and vaccines. USAID helped Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population develop and scale up a Web-based drug logistics management system in all 75 of the country's districts, allowing health facilities to request essential drugs based on actual need, thereby reducing stock-outs and use of expired products.

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After a USAID-funded pilot found that applying chlorhexidine to umbilical cord stumps reduced neonatal mortality by 23 percent, USAID supported Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population to scale up use of the lotion nationwide and export it to other countries. Similarly, after studies showed that the anti-hemorrhage drug misoprostol could be feasibly distributed by Nepal's Female Community Health Volunteers to reduce postpartum bleeding, a leading cause of maternal mortality, USAID helped the Ministry scale up misoprostol use nationwide to reduce deaths particularly among the 82 percent of Nepali women who give birth at home.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS :

USAID is forging partnerships that leverage resources and harness the science, technology and innovation that exists throughout the region to enhance development outcomes and maximize impact.

One in every 22 Nepali babies dies before reaching age 1, and 1 in every 19 does not survive to his/her fifth birthday. Although there have been great improvements, neonatal mortality has remained stagnant for the past five years. Almost two-thirds of all deliveries occur at home in generally unhygienic conditions, increasing the risk of maternal death and neonatal infection—which is the leading cause of death among newborn babies.

More than 70 percent of Nepali households do not have bank accounts, yet over 70 percent of households own a mobile phone. Approximately half of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is outside the formal sector, and less than 2 percent of credit from Nepal's financial institutions is extended to women borrowers.

Nepal is considered to be a source and transit country for illegal wildlife poaching and trade. An estimated 198 adult Bengal Tigers are known to inhabit the four protected areas of Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape. Lack of quality scientific data hampers efforts to protect tigers and other species.

CONTEXT



KEY USAID PARTNERSHIPS TACKLING THESE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

With USAID's support, a Nepali company pioneered a DNA tracking technology that is expected to give law enforcement agencies, conservationists and researchers more ammunition in their work to protect and conserve wildlife and their habitats. Nepal now has a comprehensive national DNA database of the endangered Bengal tigers living in Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape—one of the few remaining tiger habitats on earth.

USAID partnered with Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population to test the effectiveness of chlorhexidine, an antiseptic lotion produced by a private Nepali pharmaceutical company, in reducing newborn infections. USAID also studied whether the anti-hemorrhage drug misoprostol could be feasibly distributed by Female Community Health Volunteers to reduce postpartum bleeding, a leading cause of maternal mortality. Both drugs were found to be effective.

With over 70 percent of Nepal's families equipped with a mobile phone and 72 percent without access to formal financial services, USAID's recognized the *potential of mobile banking* to reach the country's predominantly unbanked households. Since 2011, USAID has partnered with private banks, regulators, and mobile technology providers to support the launch of mobile banking services that allow customers to make deposits, transfer or receive money, and take out loans using their phones.

IMPACTS

In 2011, USAID helped launch a mobile banking service that greatly increased access to financial services for Nepal's predominantly unbanked rural population. Today, mobile financial services agents operate in 30 of Nepal's 75 districts, helping banks reach disburse over \$2.3 million in rural loans to almost 8,000 new borrowers, mostly women. Nepali banks estimate that mobile banking services will expand nationwide within five years and include new products such as insurance, health services and market information.

Working in partnership with a private Nepali forensics company, the USAID-funded Nepal Tiger Genome Project used innovative genetic technology to build the first comprehensive, national DNA database of endangered Bengal tigers living in Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape by collecting and recording a unique genetic fingerprint from each adult tiger's scat. The technology is now being considered for use by INTERPOL and law enforcement in Africa to help track and prevent the illegal trade of endangered species.



The laboratory of Center for Molecular Dynamics in Nepal to perform comprehensive genetic analysis of tiger scat samples



NEW! USAID Launches SAMBAD: Dialogue for Peace, a new Conflict Management and Mitigation Project

After launching the Community Initiatives for Common Understanding and Inclusive Resource Management Initiative projects in June 2013, USAID launched the third of its Conflict Management and Mitigation projects, titled Sambah: Dialogue for Peace, in August this year. The project seeks to promote peace through increased mutual trust and social harmony in the targeted districts of Rupandehi and Nawalparashi of the western Terai region.

Implemented by CARE Nepal, Sambah: Dialogue for Peace is a three-year, \$1.15 million effort to mitigate conflict at the local level in 30 VDCs of the two conflict-affected districts. CARE will work in partnership with local NGOs, Namuna Integrated Development Council (Namuna) and Legal Assistance and Research Center (LARC), to address the root cause of the decade-long conflict by bringing together representatives of conflicting groups to interact purposefully in a safe space. The project will support conflict-affected communities by strengthening and promoting linkages between victim groups and the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction's peacebuilding policy, mechanisms, and programs.

PROGRAMS: ELECTION-RELATED UPDATES

Training for Poll Watchers

The USAID-funded Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes program organized a series of simultaneous trainings for political party poll watchers in all five developmental regions of Nepal in September and October 2013. The training covered more than 1,600 participants, representing nine political parties, from 10 districts: Kathmandu, Dhankuta, Morang, Parsa, Kaski, Rupandehi, Banke, Surkhet, Kailai and Dadeldhura. Officials from these districts' Election Offices facilitated mock election polling station exercises for participants, using sample ballot paper, ballot boxes, and voter lists. USAID's implementing partner, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) furnished pocket-size party poll watcher manuals and checklists to participants for reference and use on election day. Some political parties replicated the party poll agent trainings in various districts, while all major parties have requested additional trainings in Kathmandu.

Civil Society Media Campaign calling for 33 Percent Representation of Women

Also in September, NDI supported a media campaign calling for 33 percent representation of women in the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA). The campaign included TV and radio adverts, delivering messages about the importance of supporting women to achieve 33 percent representation. Also, the campaign representatives met with the country's President, Ram Baran Yadav, to solicit his support and commitment to their cause and share the campaign poster and pins. After the candidate deadline on October 4, the advocacy group is now exploring additional support for women running under the first-past-the-post system. Out of 5,678 first-past-the-post candidates, 646 are female.

Printing Proportionate Representation Ballot

On October 5, in preparation for the November 19 elections, the state printing facility, Janak Education Materials Centre (JEMC), started printing proportionate representation system ballots under tight government security. JEMC had printed first-past-the-post ballots for the 240 constituencies with the names of more than 6,000 candidates by mid-October. As mandated by law, JEMC used a color system with pink proportionate representation ballots and blue First Past the Post ballots. Post-production activities including ballot perforation, numbering, cutting, and packaging ran simultaneously with the printing process. USAID's implementing partner, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, provided on-site technical support, ballot monitoring, and guidance to ensure the smooth functioning of the three refurbished and one new press procured with USAID funding. JEMC completed ballot printing by the end of October.

The Carter Center Observed Election Preparations Nationwide

Carter Center International Long-Term Observers monitored election preparations in all five development regions since their deployment in Nepal on September 23. In addition to regular meetings with election stakeholders, the Long-Term Observers observed the Candidate Registration Process for proportionate representation and first-past-the-post seats in several districts prior to the October 4 deadline. Long-Term Observers reported a generally positive sense among stakeholders about the election and the political environment, but found very little evidence of political party campaigning in the districts. Earlier, on October 1, the Carter Center released its Sixth Interim Report on Voter Registration. The report applauds the Election Commission of Nepal's efforts to finalize a new voter roll for the November Constituent Assembly election while expressing concern for the potential voters not registered. A "major step forward in improving the quality of the voter register and Nepal's electoral process" is the Election Commission- and Ministry of Home Affairs-coordinated program to link voter registration and citizenship registration outside of district headquarters via mobile camps from March-July 2013. The report also covers the claims and objection processes implemented after the original July 15, 2013 registration cutoff date, as well as the reopened voter registration window in August. The full report can be found on the [Carter Center's website](#).



Interested in learning more about USAID's work to support the elections? If you missed the snapshot in our last edition of the Newsletter, you can view the update [here](#).

Combating Trafficking:

USAID and its Partners Join hands with the Ministry of Education to Launch Anti-Trafficking Curriculum

In September 2013, the USAID-funded Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) project rolled out a curriculum on anti-trafficking and safe migration, developed in collaboration with Nepal's Ministry of Education. It is anticipated that the curriculum will become a part of the formal school curriculum in the next academic year. In addition, USAID's partner World Education worked with the Ministry's Curriculum Development Center to train local public school teachers to deliver key messages and information to young men and women vulnerable to trafficking and illegal labor practices. The Curriculum Development Center led the training programs in the six CTIP program districts in coordination with District Education Office. This pilot will reach 82 schools serving grades 6-12 found in Nepal's primary trafficking source, transit and destination districts.

IMPACT

Since 2010, the CTIP project has worked closely with the Government to address the prevention of trafficking, the protection of victims, and the prosecution of human traffickers in Nepal. This five-year, \$6.79 million project targets six trafficking-prone areas identified

by the Government of Nepal and adjudicating human trafficking cases. This training directly contributed to 28 convictions—and 3 landmark cases—in 2012.

- Developed the National Minimum Standards for Victim Care and Protection with the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare, now being implemented by the National Committee on Combatting Human Trafficking.
- Reached about 32,000 vulnerable community members, raising their awareness of trafficking, safe migration, and their role and responsibilities in the process.
- Strengthened the operational capacity of 7 shelter homes established for TIP survivors on victim-centric approaches. This support contributed to 143 TIP survivors benefitting from basic TIP shelter services, such as food, skills training, and health, in a safe and secure environment.
- Developed and implemented a training curriculum, on communication skills and advocacy for community level facilitators to improve safe migration strategies in all six project districts.



USAID's CTIP program reached about 32,000 vulnerable community members, raising their awareness of trafficking, safe migration, and their role and responsibilities in the process.

EXCLUSIVE

Reflecting Back on the Early Days of USAID's 20-Year Support to the HIV Response in Nepal

Based on a phone interview with **Mr. Ram Hari Neupane**, Coordinator, District AIDS Coordination Committee (DACC), Chitwan District. Mr. Neupane first joined USAID's AIDSCAP I project in 1995 as an Outreach Educator working with the General Welfare Pratisthan, a local NGO partner for USAID-funded HIV programs. Since 2006, he has worked as the DACC Coordinator for Chitwan District and played an active role in the HIV response.



Back in 1988, when the first HIV case was reported in Nepal, people were still in the dark about HIV. The very term HIV/AIDS was synonymous with an immoral taboo because of its perceived prevalence among female sex workers, drug addicts and those living with sexually transmitted diseases. HIV-positive people were socially ostracized and/or discriminated against and had no care or support system available to them.

This mindset and attitude towards HIV/AIDS still hadn't changed when USAID, in partnership with the Government of Nepal, introduced the nation's first AIDS-related project, titled AIDS Control and Prevention Project I (AIDSCAP I) in 1993, to create and spread HIV awareness. The project introduced behavior change communication activities and outreach services, which included safe sex practices and the promotion of condoms among at-risk populations such as female sex workers, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, and people living with sexually transmitted infections or diseases. Volunteers and field staff conducted rigorous door-to-door visits to increase household awareness of HIV/AIDS and change perceptions of the disease in order to encourage HIV-infected people and their families to seek care, support and treatment.

Initially communities resisted the message, as people did not want to hear about HIV/AIDS or participate for fear of the associated stigma. This uncooperative environment posed serious challenges for the project field workers such as myself. One of the biggest challenges we faced back then was to be able to open people's minds and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS, which was a highly sensitive issue and not discussed freely in the community. For example, in one of those earlier DACC workshops organized by USAID, one of the participants, a police representative, wanted the names and photos of HIV-positive individuals so that these individuals could be put inside a sack and thrown into the river. At some health camps, the locals chased field staff, accusing them of supporting HIV-infected people and encouraging sex by distributing condoms. The idea of putting condoms on display at hotels and encouraging

people to carry them was frowned upon. This was a time when people living with HIV faced daily hardships just to exist in their own communities, let alone seek help or services.

Despite these hurdles, we never gave up, as the desperate plight of the people living with HIV only acted as an incentive to work harder. With continued guidance and support from USAID, we conducted multiple orientation programs and interactions on HIV with local NGOs and government staff to reduce discrimination by service providers and to promote coordination and collaboration among different stakeholders. We focused on empowering HIV-infected people disclose and talk openly about their HIV status. Through widespread behavior change communication activities, media campaigns, condom distribution, and HIV-themed events during local festivals and street dramas, the work on HIV awareness and prevention slowly started to move in the right direction.

At some health camps, the locals chased field staff, accusing them of supporting HIV-infected people and encouraging sex by distributing condoms.

The Nepal Government established the National Center for AIDS and STD Control in 1995 and released the first draft of the National Policy on HIV, making efforts to prevent HIV and mitigate its effects a high government priority. HIV/AIDS in Nepal was declared a 'concentrated epidemic,' meaning HIV prevalence primarily exists among specific key populations such as female sex workers and people who inject drugs. New donor-supported programs in partnership with local agencies, stakeholders, and the government started to emerge and address the

existing gaps. And AIDSCAP I became a model program for HIV/AIDS interventions and initiatives in the country. In time, through USAID support, people living with HIV also created support group networks to help others in the same situation. As HIV mitigation efforts multiplied and progressed, USAID further supported the formation and strengthening of national networks for beneficiary groups. Today these networks have evolved into vital pillars supporting the overall National HIV Response through greater involvement from the affected populations. The Government of Nepal has now established DACCs in 50 out of 75 districts of Nepal to manage the local district responses and to provide free of cost, voluntary HIV counseling and testing.

Over the past 20 years USAID, under the leadership and guidance of the Government of Nepal and in collaboration with multiple national, international, and local stakeholders, has left a remarkable legacy in the history of the HIV response in Nepal. Through its steadfast commitment to achieving an AIDS-free generation, the foundation has been laid by USAID and partners by greatly streamlining and standardizing the country's HIV prevention and care programs; improving the reach of treatment activities; and increasing access to quality services for key affected populations. All of this has been crucial in reducing the stigma and discrimination towards HIV/AIDS in the country. Today people do not hesitate to talk about condoms and HIV/AIDS. Thanks to this united effort, according to the National Estimate 2003-2011 released by National Center for AIDS and STD Control, the national HIV prevalence rate among the general adult population has dropped from 0.52 percent in 2003 to 0.30 percent in 2011 – a reduction of more than 40 percent!



Behaviour change communication activities and outreach services to create and spread HIV awareness

A Second Chance: Raising Healthy Children with USAID's Support

Mina was only 17 when she married Mekhraj Gurung from Lamjung District. A year later, she gave birth to their first child without her husband by her side. Each year, approximately 300,000 Nepali youth leave the country to become migrant laborers abroad, and Mekhraj had joined the bandwagon by traveling to Dubai in search of better employment. Living with her in-laws, Mina assumed the traditional role of a daughter-in-law by taking full responsibility for all the household chores, which continued throughout her pregnancy. During that time, Mina never sought any formal healthcare, did not know where the nearest health post was located and knew next to nothing about the importance of antenatal check-ups, vitamins or vaccines during pregnancy. When Mina fell ill, she consulted local traditional healers for medical advice and gave birth at home with the assistance of local women, a typical practice for women in rural areas. Sadly, Mina's baby died within fifteen days of delivery.

During Mina's second pregnancy, Mekhraj moved from Dubai to Mumbai. In her desire to be near her husband, Mina went to India with her mother-in-law to give birth to their second child. During this time, Mina was more conscientious of her health; she ate more regularly and did fewer household chores in an attempt to avoid her first tragedy. She also chose to deliver in a hospital, where she gave birth to a daughter named Supriya. Mina returned back to Nepal with Supriya but she was still unfamiliar with the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and the proper nutrition needed for infants, Mina started feeding Supriya porridge and other food at the tender age of five months, just after the 'rice-feeding' ceremony – another age-old practice passed down through generations. As a result, Supriya suffered health problems caused by under



nutrition.

Things improved for Mina in July 2013 after she participated in ward-level nutrition education training, conducted by the USAID-funded integrated nutrition project Suaahara. Initially, many of the concepts taught were difficult to accept, such as the need to wash hands thoroughly on a regular basis. Yet after detailed demonstrations by Suaahara field staff, and explanations as to how hand washing and other practices could improve one's health, she slowly started to accept and incorporate them into her daily life. Today, Mina makes a point of washing her hands with soap and water before preparing meals and feeding her children. She also better understands the importance of antenatal check-ups, exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months, nutritious complementary feeding after six months of age and clean drinking water.

The timing of the Suaahara training was perfect, as Mina was pregnant with her third child. Not only was Mina learning about ways to improve Supriya's nutrition, but she was also learning how to take better care of her own health and the health of her future baby. Throughout her pregnancy, Mina made sure to get enough rest, and she attended four antenatal checkups where she received iron tablets and vaccinations against tetanus. She also began to feed Supriya nutritious green vegetables, meat and eggs, all through the support of the Suaahara program and her local Female Community Health Volunteer, Ram Maya Shrestha. Mina happily gave birth to a healthy baby girl child in a hospital with a skilled birth attendant.

Mina's story is not unique for Nepal's women, especially those who come from rural areas and lack adequate knowledge on properly caring for themselves



(Pics) Mina Gurung with her daughter Supriya

or their children.

Given that Nepal has one of the highest rates of under-5 undernutrition in the world, USAID's Suaahara project has helped many women like Mina by providing them with the right knowledge and tools so that their children grow to be healthy and strong. Suaahara is a comprehensive community-focused project dedicated to improving the health and nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women and children less than two years of age, thereby directly addressing the vulnerable points of a child's development. This critical period can have devastating consequences on a child's ability to do well in school and eventually become an economically successful adult. Suaahara focuses on improving nutrition; maternal, newborn, and child health; reproductive health/family planning; water, sanitation and hygiene; and home-based gardening of nutritious foods in 20 districts.



Thanks to Suaahara, mothers are now armed with the skills to cultivate green leafy vegetables, ensuring that there's a sustainable source of healthy complementary foods to feed their growing infants. So far, USAID-supported homestead food production activities have benefited over 40,000 families in Nepal.

A REPORT: Nepal's Largest Contraceptive Marketer Launches an Exciting New Condom Called D'zire

Since the launch of the first oral contraceptive pills and condoms in 1978, the Nepal Contraceptive Retail Sales (CRS) Company has established itself as a key driver in the growth of Nepal's private health sector and family planning industry. From the very beginning CRS, with USAID's support, has successfully distributed low-cost family planning products through its innovative and far-reaching social marketing network, which includes its flagship condom brands – Dhaal and Panther.

While CRS has been successful in making itself a national leader in social marketing and franchising, it seeks to boost its existing subsidized product portfolio with profit-making public health products, which will help the company continue building a healthier future for Nepal.

Dhaal and Panther are targeted mainly towards men in the 49 hard-to-reach hilly and mountainous districts, as well as areas with high rates of transactional sexual activity. These quality products are subsidized by USAID, which procures the products and provides them to CRS to distribute and sell at subsidized prices to make them affordable to low-income groups. CRS's new D'zire dotted condoms, on the other hand, are priced at par with other commercial brands of condoms

on the market and meet the United States Food and Drug Administration quality requirements. With the tagline 'Make Each Moment Memorable,' D'zire is marketed and designed to appeal to a more youthful demographic living in the urban and semi-urban areas and will be made available in almost all pharmacies, pan shops, kiosks and grocery stores across the nation.

CRS has transitioned towards greater organizational independence by successfully taking on all of the management responsibility for the design and launch of D'zire. CRS conducted an international-standard tender and quality inspection process to ensure it was procuring high-quality condoms at a competitive price. This was an independently conducted business transaction with limited USAID support. For CRS, this milestone has opened new opportunities for making profitable products to support the more subsidized ones. Mr. Krishna B. Rayamajhi, Managing Director of CRS, highlighted the importance of funding from the United States Government to support CRS's transition towards greater independence, adding, "CRS will use profits generated from the sale of D'zire to make other USAID-subsidized brands more affordable to the buyers."



Collaboration Across Sectors Strengthens Communities and Food Security in Nepal

A common saying, “*Khayo Makai, Nakhayo Bhokai*,” or “If there is no maize, there is nothing to eat,” often holds true for people living in the hilly regions of Nepal. Maize is the second most important food crop in the country after rice. For the majority of Nepalis living in the hills, maize cultivation is a traditional livelihood passed down through generations, and corn flour is used to make staple foods like dhedo and roti, two traditional breads in the region.

But while maize grown in the hills of Nepal makes up about a quarter of the national food grain supply, smallholder farmers struggle to meet demand for this important staple crop. They face a difficult terrain, climatic risks, and limited access to new information and technology that could help improve low and poor-quality yields. As a result, many families in rural Nepal endure chronic poverty, hunger and undernutrition.

Feed the Future is working in partnership with a network of government, research, NGO and community stakeholders in Nepal to equip smallholder farmers with the knowledge and tools they need to sustainably boost maize quality and production. A Feed the Future program managed by the USAID and co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation focuses on 20 remote hill districts of Nepal and aims to improve food security and increase household incomes for 50,000 rural families.

One critical way the program is achieving its objectives is by supporting the development of community-based seed production groups in all 20 target districts. These groups benefit from groundbreaking agricultural research on high-yield; climate-resilient maize varieties conducted by national Nepali research centers supported by Feed the Future. Nepal’s district agricultural development offices disseminate these new varieties to local NGO partners, who then work directly with local farmers and community groups to plant improved seeds and implement better crop management techniques.

The program also empowers farmers to produce the improved seed varieties themselves over the long term, helping to build sustainable local seed markets. The community groups receive training on all aspects of seed production, from field inspection to certification and post-harvest management. To date, the program has improved the capacity of 207 community-based seed production groups, 31 of which are in the process of graduating into cooperatives, and several groups have even grown to become full-fledged private seed companies.



Dhal Bahadur Bhandari (above, right), a farmer from Nepal’s Sindhupalchowk district, is now the coordinator of Hariyali Community Seed Private

Company Limited, a company that started out as a community-based seed production group supported under Feed the Future. The company now produces, processes, packages and sells improved seeds across local and regional markets, providing services to about 1,800 people.

“Initially, due to lack of awareness, farmers would hesitate to purchase locally grown seeds. But after the successful harvest of the first crop, they slowly started adopting these new maize varieties and technologies. Thanks to the improved seeds, the farmers of Sindhupalchowk district are now producing four metric tons of maize per hectare compared to 1.7 metric tons earlier,” Bhandari says proudly. **“Our combined efforts have already started bearing fruit. It has improved the living standards of thousands of farmers and their families. Their children are going to school and most of them are food-secure.”**

As a result of this support under Feed the Future and its programs, the target districts in Nepal have produced a cumulative 3,000 metric tons of maize seed, generating nearly one million dollars in sales. To date, maize yields in Nepal have grown by 36 percent, leading to improved livelihoods and better nutrition among rural households in particular.

These visible impacts on food security led Nepal’s Ministry of Agricultural Development to design a new maize seed improvement effort of its own modeled on the success of the Feed the Future program. As a result, the Government of Nepal will invest \$650,000 in 19 other hill districts starting this year, providing subsidies and technical assistance to farmers for improved maize seed production.

This article was published in the October edition of [Feed the Future Newsletter](#), 2013.

Rina Chaudhury of the rural Dang district in Nepal’s Mid-Western region has risen from the ashes of modern-day slavery to become a self-sufficient, empowered farmer. Rina was sold into forced labor as a little girl through Nepal’s notorious Kamalari indentured servant system. When she was finally freed, she was able to marry but had no skills to earn money. “I have always had to depend on my husband for money. Who else could I turn to?” she said. But now, thanks to help from USAID/ Nepal’s Education for Income Generation project (EIG), which increased water efficiency and taught marginalized people in Nepal’s Mid-Western region the skills to thrive, Rina is the proud owner of a booming vegetable business.

People in the Mid-Western Region, where poverty is rampant, face a number of challenges. Lack of physical infrastructure makes service delivery difficult, and farmers often do not have key inputs such as water. Over three-quarters lack access to improved sanitation. Consequently, over 10 percent of deaths of children under 5 are due to diarrhea.

At the heart of these problems is water – water for sanitation, water for growing food, and clean water for drinking. To simultaneously address these competing needs, EIG introduced multiple-use systems (MUS), a concept that USAID is increasingly employing around the world. MUS employs a multi-faceted approach that can meet domestic, agricultural, and sanitation demands, so water resources are efficiently and safely utilized.

Dr. Mary Renwick, who leads the MUS portfolio for EIG’s implementing partner Winrock International, said that with traditional single-use systems, “Irrigation canals may be used for bathing or people may water their livestock at a drinking water well.” This can lead to contaminated drinking water, inefficient use, and conflicts over water. “MUS is a way of avoiding those scenarios by strategically planning for people’s domestic and productive water needs, with the overarching goal of improving health and livelihoods sustainably,” Dr. Renwick said.

The new community water systems in Nepal consist of a single source pipe with dual storage and distribution systems for domestic use and for irrigation using drip and micro-sprinklers. The systems cost \$100- \$150 per household and are funded with investments from public and private sector sources within each community. They are particularly life changing for women, who are typically responsible for collecting water in

Nepal. As a result of EIG’s relatively small investments in MUS, women who once devoted vast amounts of time and energy to fetching water can channel those efforts into expanding their farms and growing high-value vegetables.

To ensure sustainability, USAID trained young people to manage the water systems and facilitated the formation of water user groups to ensure the community could maintain the systems. In addition, the project trained 74,000 people on literacy, hygiene, nutrition, agricultural productivity, and other life skills. The benefits of these trainings have reverberated as EIG alumnae have launched their own businesses and created jobs for their countrymen and women.

“The impact of the program on household well-being has been enormous,” said Anita Mahat, an economic specialist for USAID/ Nepal. “It addressed education, health, and food security. The empowerment of women was visible. These are sustainable impacts.”

Though USAID’s EIG ended in March 2013, the work will continue under two new projects that are part of the U.S. Feed the Future Initiative. The first, the Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture project, or KISAN (“farmer” in Nepali), is already underway, aiming to improve agriculture production, nutrition, and hygiene throughout Nepal, with an emphasis on women and children under 5 years old. And the second, an entrepreneurial literacy project, will continue and expand upon some of the training successes of EIG, targeting KISAN beneficiaries.

Outside Nepal, Winrock is applying the lessons of EIG to expand MUS around the world. “We’re consciously working on building linkages between South Asia, West Africa, and East Africa through cross-learning, joint training, and research to facilitate acceleration of MUS scale-up,” said Ms. Renwick.

Meanwhile, the thousands reached by USAID continue to benefit from the increased access to water for all of their needs and the skills that have given them new earning power. Due to these interventions, more than 54,000 people working in agriculture, 82 percent of whom are women, have increased their incomes by an average of 250 percent.

Rina is one of these women, and her ambitions continue to soar. “Today, with my EIG education, I am determined to grow my agricultural business,” she said. “My self-confidence is higher now.”

Improving Efficiency with Multiple-Use Systems in Nepal

By **Katie Unger Baillie**

(This article originally appeared in the USAID’s [Global Waters](#) online publication)



An EIG trainer demonstrates how to use drip irrigation, a water-efficient method of growing crops. Pic: George Figdor



Multiple Use Water Systems was first introduced in Nepal by a USAID project in the early 2000s. USAID’s currently ongoing agriculture and climate change activities, like the Initiative for Climate Change Adaptation is scaling-up the use of these multiple-use water systems across the country. We’re also introducing solar-powered versions, which enable farmers to use drip irrigation for high-value crops, increasing their annual income by over a third.

Saving Lives and Livelihoods, and the Planet – One Village at a Time

Most villages in Nepal are lucky to have a river running through them, or near them, for sheer accessibility to water. In western Nepal's Banke district, the Duduwa River surrounds the Farm Tole village on three sides. As picturesque and convenient as this may appear, the river also makes the village naturally vulnerable to floods. Over the years monsoon flooding has become progressively more serious, threatening not just the lives of the locals, but also their livelihoods: every year land along the river is washed away, a significant loss for the predominantly poor Dalits and subsistence farmers who make up the village's population. And it isn't monsoon floods, it is delayed monsoon. Like much of Nepal, locals here too depend on rainfall for agriculture. And with increasingly erratic monsoons, farmers are beginning to see unreliable crop production and chronic losses. But Farm Tole is on the cusp of transforming itself. With impressive advances in livelihoods, women's empowerment, health, sanitation, and climate change adaptation, Farm Tole is today more resilient to climate and economic shocks and stresses. And in June 2013 it was declared Banke district's 'First Model Village.'

Part of that transformation was enabled through USAID's Global Climate Change (GCC) Initiative in Nepal. The Agency's flagship GCC project in Nepal, called Hariyo Ban or Green Forests, is designed to help reduce threats to biological diversity and vulnerability to climate change, with an emphasis on conserving critical bio-diverse forest areas in two large landscapes in the country and supporting local livelihoods that reduce pressure on forests and help people move out of poverty. Hariyo Ban is implemented by a consortium of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), CARE, the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and the Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN), with WWF as the lead partner.

To achieve its goal, Hariyo Ban helps villages like Farm Tole identify their most pressing risks and develop sound local solutions to address those life-and-livelihood-threatening challenges. To make the efforts effective, the approach is holistic by design.

The project first helped establish a community learning and action center (CLAC) at Farm Tole – an informal platform for rural women and marginalized people to unite and organize, enabling them to take a leadership role in local social transformation efforts. Ganga Nath, 47, Farm Tole resident and recently elected CLAC chairperson shares, "thanks to the classes and discussions in the Center, we are now more informed about climate change, and see our problems in a new light, especially those related to health and environment. This understanding is helping us in proposing ideas for our community adaptation plan, which was created in an effort for us to adapt to climate change. The plan is currently being implemented."

The risk of flooding in Farm Tole is too real and too dangerous to ignore. "Our village was inundated with a huge flood in 2006. Eleven houses were swept away by the flood," recalls resident Shambhu Nath, 52. "Every other year, there were floods that eroded our fertile lands and made life difficult. We wanted to do

something to protect ourselves, but did not know what or how."

That is why to reduce its risks, the Hariyo Ban project supported village residents to plant cactus and bamboo along a 1,500 meter stretch of the Duduwa River, helping bind the soil, slow the water, and reduce the risk of soil erosion.

With their farmlands better protected, locals were trained in off-season commercial vegetable farming so that they could make the most of their land and improve their income. Today, residents of Farm Tole are producing asparagus seeds for medicinal purposes with plans to produce the seeds on a commercial scale and establish a seed processing plant. USAID is supporting the purchase of a grinding machine for asparagus roots that will be packaged along with seeds for sale in the market. Officials from the District Agriculture Development Office and Plant Resource Office are now also part of this livelihood-creation initiative at Farm Tole, and are supporting asparagus farming in the village, thereby ensuring sustainability of its future production.

Through projects like Hariyo Ban, USAID's efforts have enabled over 162,000 of Nepal's poorest and most vulnerable people to build the resiliency they need to thrive, including by conserving biodiversity, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to a changing environment and sustainably managing their natural resources.

There is more. Hariyo Ban project support has enabled Farm Tole to reduce the use of firewood, previously their primary source of fuel. Today, with improved cooking stoves and biogas plants in the village, indoor air pollution and pressure on local forests have been significantly reduced.

Local resident Mina Malla Pun, 29, says, "Earlier, we spent a lot of time foraging for firewood because of our traditional stoves, but now with the installation of improved cooking stoves and biogas, we have drastically reduced the use of firewood. This has led to improved health of those of us who slogged over a smoky stove earlier."

In Hariyo Ban's priority forest regions, in many places adjacent to forests like Farm Tole of Banke district, Jumdanda of Tanahu District and Kumroj of Chitwan district, USAID funding has installed more than 2,500 biogas plants in the last two years alone. Each biogas plant helps reduce the amount of carbon emissions by 4 tons per year.

Kumroj Village Development Committee (VDC) in Chitwan district, in fact, was declared Nepal's first model biogas VDC, also in June 2013 (a VDC is an administrative unit that in rural areas contains nine wards with several hamlets). Today, over 80 percent of the 1,750 households in Kumroj VDC have biogas installed.

Laxmi Rana, a satisfied biogas user from another

village, Jumdanda, shares, "Installing biogas in our home has saved a lot of time. Women use this spare time to participate in community activities that in turn have raised our confidence. We're more vocal about our needs, and thanks to platforms like CLAC, we are organized and know how to identify our priorities and resolve our problems. Recently, to help conserve biodiversity in our nearby community forests, we have set penalties through CLAC for anyone involved in wildlife poaching."

Installation of biogas plants is one of the most widely used methods to help families and communities both conserve their natural resources and improve the resilience and wellbeing of families. The restored forest is also expected to absorb more rainwater and help reduce flooding of the river. It offers a more suitable environment for local wildlife and flora.

USAID funding was first used for biogas in Nepal in the early 1990s, starting with 10 plants. This waste-to-energy tool has been scaled up across the country with funding from several donors. With over 290,000 biogas plants in operation in Nepal, the country is widely regarded as a pioneer and forerunner in biogas technology. It has the world's highest number of biogas systems per capita, outnumbering China and India. Almost every district in the country boasts a biogas company.

Following the biogas installation, villages like Jumdanda, Kumroj and Farm Tole have also seen improved sanitation, with open defecation practices significantly reduced. After all, human waste, cattle dung, and other biodegradable matter are the main ingredients for the biogas, and households construct a toilet from which the organic matter is channeled into the biogas digester.

Speaking at the Kumroj VDC inauguration event organized earlier this year on World Environment Day, Agricultural Development and Forests and Soil Conservation Minister Tek Bahadur Thapa Gharti remarked, "The use of biogas not only helps to reduce the use of firewood, thereby decreasing pressure on the forests, but is also a much healthier fuel. Agricultural development is essential for national progress, and the use of biogas slurry as an organic fertilizer will help to ensure healthy crops. Biogas plants require cattle which also provide nutrition to families and communities and can open up new livelihood opportunities. Also, biogas projects introduce communities to toilets – communities with toilets are healthier communities."

Biogas is also an example of how poor countries like Nepal can help combat global warming. According to climate change experts, over 1.05 million metric tons of carbon emissions was avoided in the last five years by Nepal through large-scale use of biogas.

Through projects like Hariyo Ban, USAID's efforts have enabled over 162,000 of Nepal's poorest and most vulnerable people to build the resiliency they need to thrive, including by conserving biodiversity, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to a changing environment and sustainably managing their natural resources.



A beneficiary in Kumroj demonstrates how the mixture is churned in the biogas pit, typically constructed next to a toilet.



A Kumroj dweller cooks food with the help of her newly installed biogas plant.



Local CLAC members from Kamdi VDC, Banke District.

Implementing Building Codes to Save Lives

By Santosh Gyawali, Senior Disaster Specialist, USAID Nepal

Based on an estimated current population of three million inhabitants in Kathmandu, experts believe that a large earthquake would result in at least 100,000 deaths, 300,000 injuries, and 1.6 million displaced in the capital city alone. In 2000, a study carried out by Geohazard International as part of the Global Earthquake Safety initiative in the Kathmandu Valley revealed that more than two-thirds of that earthquake risk comes from poorly constructed buildings not built to seismic codes, provisions intended to ensure that structures can adequately resist seismic forces during earthquakes. The study found that rapid urbanization, with its resulting unplanned growth and inadequate enforcement of regulations, has led to substandard and unsafe housing patterns.

The most crucial factor in reducing a community's risk from an earthquake is the adoption and enforcement of up-to-date building codes. To survive and remain resilient, communities must strengthen their core infrastructure and critical facilities so that these can withstand an earthquake or other disaster and continue to provide essential services. Understanding this crucial need to create and enforce building codes specifying the minimum acceptable level of safety for structures, the Government of Nepal endorsed the National Building Code about a decade ago. However, its actual implementation at the municipality level has been progressing very slowly, putting lives at risk.

As a part of its broader assistance to reduce disaster risk in Nepal, USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster

Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is currently supporting a three-year project titled 'Building Code Implementation Program in Municipalities of Nepal' (BCIPN), which started in October 2012. The National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET) is implementing this project in 24 municipalities or urban centers of Nepal and will help increase the capability of municipal governments to develop and administer an effective building permit and control system for ensuring improved seismic performance of all new building construction. Through a series of training programs and awareness-raising activities for the community, the project will help the municipalities to develop an effective mechanism for building code implementation, and will work toward increasing public awareness and technical knowledge of the residents, municipal officials, and technical professionals on aspects of earthquake risk management including earthquake-resistant design and construction.

During the project period of three years, BCIPN expects to enhance the safety of two million Nepali people (24 municipalities, each with a population of approximately 100,000 people) through construction of earthquake-resistant buildings. The project will also train at least 400 engineers and 1,800 masons on seismically sound construction and increase the awareness to earthquake risk of 20,000 residents.

WORKSHOP: BUILDING CODE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM IN MUNICIPALITIES OF NEPAL:

As part of its Disaster Risk Reduction assistance, USAID/OFDA supported a workshop organized jointly by the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Urban Development and the National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET) on 'Building Code Implementation Program in Municipalities of Nepal'. The event took place on September 17, 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal and was opened by Peter W. Bodde, the United States Ambassador to Nepal. The purpose of the workshop was to provide a forum in which key stakeholders could discuss the key issues, challenges and future course of action related to building code implementation in Nepal. The 100 plus participants included senior government officials, municipality officials and engineers, national and international experts, representatives from professional societies, NGOs, academia, practitioners and media.



Be aware, be prepared

Earthquake Preparedness Tip:

Leave the interior doors open in your home as often as possible (even just a crack) to prevent them from jamming shut during an earthquake and trapping you inside.

And if you are in a vehicle during an earthquake, safely come to a stop and crack open your door for the same reason.



UPCOMING USAID NEPAL PUBLIC EVENTS

Interested in participating? Let us know. Email - usaidnepal@usaid.gov

November 25 - December 10: 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

As part of this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section and USAID are organizing a calendar of events to mark, highlight, and seek solutions to key issues surrounding women's rights and gender-based violence in Nepal. Here are few highlights:

December 1: **WORLD AIDS DAY** - Marking the 26th anniversary of World AIDS Day and commemorating two decades of partnership between USAID and the Government of Nepal to mitigate the effects of HIV in the country.

December 2: **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSON WITH DISABILITIES** - A discussion on global and local disability priorities with special guest Shudarshan Subedi.

December 9: **Panel Discussion: Bringing Women Rights and Gender-based Violence (GBV) to the Frontlines** - An event to help increase awareness of the key issues related to women's right and GBV in the constitution, influence public debate, and build pressure for a gender-sensitive constitution.

December 5: Female Community Health Volunteers Silver Jubilee Celebration

The Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV) Programme in Nepal was started in 1988 by the Ministry of Health and Population in order to improve community participation and to enhance the outreach of health services through local women working voluntarily in their ward. 2013 marks 25th year of the Program and USAID together with GON and other donors is organizing an event to celebrate the Silver Jubilee Celebrations. USAID will produce a multimedia package including a short video, multi-media slide show, photo exhibition, stories and articles.

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