



Will You Help #LetGirlsLearn?



An educated girl is a force for change. Because an educated girl has a ripple effect.

#LETGIRLSLEARN
Led by USAID



A girl who completes basic education is **3X** LESS LIKELY to contract HIV/AIDS as an adult.

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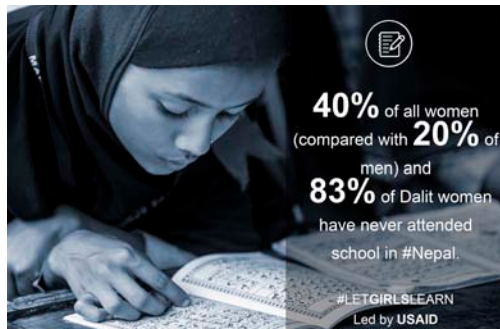
A child born to a literate mother is **50%** more likely to survive past the age of 5.

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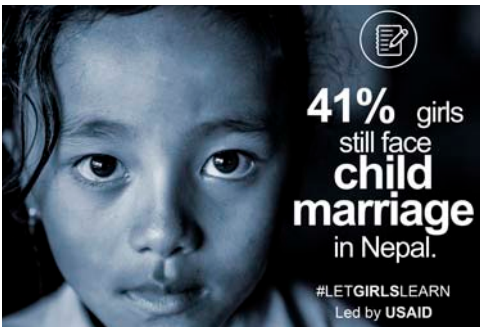
A girl with an **extra year** of education can earn **20%** more as adult.

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40% of all women (compared with **20%** of men) and **83%** of Dalit women have never attended school in #Nepal.

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41% girls still face **child marriage** in Nepal.

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Education frees girls in Nepal from alternative realities like **bonded** and **child labor**.

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Dear colleagues,

I'm delighted to bring you the June – August 2014 edition of USAID Nepal's Quarterly Newsletter featuring exciting updates and stories from our end of the development world. The front page photo story highlights a global public awareness campaign called Let Girls Learn introduced by the Agency in mid-June to continue the dialogue on girls' education. The centerpiece of the campaign is a video featuring 30 celebrities giving their support for girls' education and directing viewers to www.usaid.gov/letgirlslearn -- a new page full of great information about USAID's work on education and gender-related issues. Please check out the links!



Last month, on July 18, I had the pleasure and honor of joining Minister of Finance Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat at the launch of USAID's Business Literacy project. The new project, part of the U.S. Government's larger five-year, \$66 million Feed the Future Initiative in Nepal, seeks to build the skills of 48,000 Nepalis in the West, Mid-West and Far-West regions of the country in literacy, numeracy, entrepreneurship, financial management, nutrition, and life skills. These skills are fundamental to helping people move out of poverty. Dr. Mahat's presence and remarks at the event reinforced our belief that in order to maximize on Nepal's recent gains in peace and security, the country's focus—in addition to drafting a constitution—must be on promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth. These are the very goals of USAID's 2014 - 2018 strategy in Nepal. On page 4, we offer a glimpse of what the new strategy entails – an overview of the hypothesis, strategic choices, development objectives, and cross-cutting considerations that will drive much of our work in the next five years.

More recently, on September 3, USAID had the opportunity to organize a special Summit in Kathmandu to highlight and promote dialogue on resilience in Nepal. Our intent was to connect people and organizations working on resilience, and to encourage new models and approaches to solve complex and interrelated challenges such as extreme poverty, food security, and climate shocks. The Summit was a huge success. I was fascinated by all of the panelists, and the stream of interesting and forward leaning comments from the audience. Look out for some of the key ideas and outcomes of the Summit on pages 2 and 12.

On the Opinion page, Dr. Praveen Mishra, Secretary of Ministry of Health and Population, highlights some of the success factors for Nepal's accelerated progress in reducing maternal and child mortality. One of the ways in which USAID supports this goal is through the Suahaara project, meaning "Good Nutrition" in Nepali. Since 2011, the project works in 25 districts and is now expanding to an additional 16 to encourage simple, vital behavior changes in terms of health, hygiene and nutrition to promote a lifetime of good health for communities, families, mothers and their children – helping produce a healthier generation that reaches their full potential. **'Standing up for the Health and Nutrition for Children'** on page 10 is an inspiring story of a woman from a rural village in Rasuwa district who broke traditional norms to provide her children with the healthiest possible start in life.

Last year, on December 1, 2013, the Ministry of Health and Population signed a historic collaborative agreement with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development. It marked the first time that a formal agreement between two ministries in Nepal and set into motion one of the most dramatic and promising reforms to the Nepali health sector in recent memory. **'The Handshake that Could Reform Health Care in Nepal'** on page 10 highlights this story. For us at USAID, the agreement forged between the two Ministries exemplifies the kind of innovations and partnerships necessary to transform development aid and impact in a country.

More recently, in July 2014, we met with an important partner at the Ministry of Agriculture Development, Joint Secretary Dr. Rajendra Adhikari, to discuss some of the challenges and solutions to agriculture development in Nepal. Page 6 features excerpts from that interview and sheds light on some of the topics – public-private partnerships, innovations, extension services, import and export – that the development community needs to collectively pursue.

'Access to Citizenship and Voting Rights Key to Empowering the Most Vulnerable Nepalis' on page 9 investigates one of our disability inclusion efforts. We hope it sparks interest in more organizations to replicate and expand on the policies and practices put in place by our partners IFES and the Election Commission Nepal to ensure electoral, civic, and political rights of one of Nepal's most marginalized communities: people living with disability.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone who would be interested. And if you want to learn more about USAID Nepal, follow us on twitter and facebook!

Stay tuned,


Dr. Beth Dunford
Mission Director, USAID Nepal

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RESILIENCE SUMMIT IGNITES WELL-INFORMED DIALOGUE AND GREATER ATTENTION

On September 3, on the heels of unprecedented flooding across Nepal, USAID organized a special Resilience Summit in Kathmandu to discuss and look for new models to solve complex and interrelated challenges such as extreme poverty, food security, and climate-induced shocks. The Summit provided a timely platform for well-informed dialogue with key stakeholders from the broad development community – with more than 160 participants from government, donors, INGOs/NGOs, private sector, and media – on the topic of resilience in Nepal. Mission Director Beth Dunford launched the Summit by highlighting USAID’s vision and approach to building resilience (speech here).

The Panel Discussion on ‘Making Smarter Investments to Build a Resilient Nepal’ was especially stimulating and important. Topics covered broad-ranging perspectives on resilience, calling for greater attention and resources for preparedness than for response; stronger coordination between the various government ministries; improved government accountability for disaster mitigation and preparedness; investment in nutrition; and a national authority for disaster preparedness and management to coordinate disaster preparedness and response.

Chief Guest at the Summit, Dr. Govinda Raj Pokhrel, Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission, talked about the importance of prudent development planning, citing poorly constructed roads as a major contributor to the increased flooding in Nepal. He also highlighted declining budgets and the need to use



Panelists discuss ‘Making Smarter Investments to Build a More Resilient Nepal.’

PHOTO: USAID

available resources strategically while maintaining that 2/3 of investment in resilience should come from the private sector.

At the event, USAID also announced three new initiatives valued at up to \$70 million in funds that will help communities more quickly recover from natural disasters and other stressors.

- An up to \$70 million Community Resilience Program integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into USAID’s food and nutrition security efforts in Nepal. A quarter of Nepal’s population lives below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day, and this program will

benefit an estimated 5 million of the most vulnerable in Nepal’s hill regions.

- A \$500,000 Innovative Early Warning Flooding System: USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance will fund an early warning system to help protect communities in the Eastern region from flooding. The project will install gauges along flood-prone rivers and share real-time data with district authorities using SMS and email. This will help save lives in the event of flood.
- A \$100,000 Science and Technology Competition for Resilience – a call for bold and innovative solutions to

“building sustainable food security” in Nepal. The Competition opens on September 4, and will be open to individuals, non-profits, academic institutions, and the private sector, with a focus on districts primarily in the Mid- and Far-West regions of the country.

Given the increasing and irrefutable link between resilience and ending extreme poverty, USAID will continue to encourage smarter decisions and approaches to doing development and partner with the government and the private sector to better manage risks. The Summit received extensive coverage in the Nepali media. (Nepal News and The Himalayan Times).

Resilience is Essential to Win The Fight against Poverty

- **U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Bodde**

(Excerpts from remarks delivered at the Summit)

As many of you know, I have a personal interest in resilience. This is my third tour in Nepal. And I think we, the international community and government, have to remember to give credit to the Nepali people for the resilience they exhibit every single day.

You have talked about the challenges to doing development work in a context of recurring economic crises, natural disasters, climate change, and other shocks and stressors. Experts from government, civil society, and the private sector have shared creative ideas for making smart investments—investments that mitigate risks and build people’s capacity to rebound after a shock.

You have heard about some of the great work the U.S. Government, in partnership with the Government of Nepal, is doing to improve local governance, raise the incomes and nutrition status of women and marginalized groups, prepare for disasters, and adapt to



Chief Guest Dr. Pokhrel and U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Bodde launch three new USAID initiatives.

PHOTO: NEPALNEWS.COM

climate change.

Ultimately, resilience is all about making sure that individuals, families, and communities are prepared to deal with severe shocks and stresses. It is about helping farmers use better seeds that resist drought and give greater yields. It is about helping children start life with good nutrition so they are less vulnerable to diseases and better able to learn in school and contribute to society. It is about constructing

strong buildings that can withstand earthquakes. It is about managing forests in a way that protects against landslides and ensures a sustainable income for surrounding communities.

And it is about thinking through all these risks and solutions together—all of us bringing our unique resources and expertise.

I have been fortunate to spend a significant part of my

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Working Towards a Resilient Nepal



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

- **Gagan Thapa**, Parliamentarian, and Chair of Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resource and Energy
(Excerpts from remarks delivered at the Summit)

Development is uneven in Nepal –while attention is duly needed in Nepal’s vulnerable, remote areas outside of Kathmandu, we need to also bear in mind that today Nepal is the least urbanized country in South Asia but also its fastest urbanizing country. By 2050

more than half of Nepal’s population will be living in large urban centers. As we address the needs of rural Nepal, we should do so keeping in mind that those regions are on a fast track to becoming an urban center.

As an elected Member of Parliament from Kathmandu, I am committed to making this city a model for a resilient urban center so that it can serve as an example for other parts of Nepal. This is why working in close

Continued ... on Page 12



Dr. Praveen Mishra,
Secretary, Ministry of Health and
Population (MoHP) in Nepal

SUCCESS FACTORS FOR WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH: SAVING LIVES IN NEPAL

Nepal is more than soaring mountains with breathtaking views. We also have dry plains and hilly regions, and dealing with poverty is a challenge for communities in all these regions. Yet in the past 20 years we have slashed our high rates of maternal and infant mortality faster than other countries with comparable income levels or even wealthier than we are. What is our secret?

I can point to some ingredients of our success. One is the *amma samuha*, the “mother groups” that meet every fortnight to discuss local problems in every Nepalese ward, our administrative neighborhoods of up to 700 people. We asked each group to discuss various maternal health issues among themselves and then recommend one woman in their community to become a Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV). We also began health information campaigns of posters, broadcasts and – most importantly – street campaigns and video documentaries that are popular, especially in rural areas.

We now have 49,000 FCHVs who cover all 75 districts of Nepal. Nearly half have never been to school, but because they are neighbors, they are respected and listened to. They receive no salary, only a token incentive of 4,000 rupees per year (about \$40), a bicycle and a sign for their homes that proclaims they are FCHVs.

Since 1995, these dedicated women have visited every home in every community twice a year to give doses of Vitamin A to breastfeeding women and children up to age five. They also collect data on each household, and they have branched out to provide deworming pills, immunizations, family planning materials, and information on sanitation, nutrition and infant care.

The program now reaches 94 percent of all children six months to five years old, whose mortality rate has dropped from 94 per 10,000 in 1993 to 52. At least 12,000 lives have been saved.

The Vitamin A program was a key effort. In 1993, we began trying to persuade pregnant and breastfeeding women and children in the Sarlahi area of southern Nepal to take supplements of Vitamin A because scientific literature shows it is essential to good eyesight and proper overall body function, especially in children. But it is found in the leafy greens, orange and red vegetables and animal liver that are not



Using a timer, an FCHV in Nepalgunj counts a child's respiratory rate to confirm a diagnosis of a possible respiratory infection. Nepal has one of the highest neonatal mortality rates in the world. Although overall mortality has declined in children, newborns continue to die at alarming rates. Community-based services, such as the one pictured above, are primarily delivered by FCHVs and are a large reason for Nepal's 48% reduction in under-five mortality between 1996 and 2006.

PHOTO: USAID



“We realize we have a long way to go in reducing inequities that exist between communities, but our record shows we are on the right track. We call upon all Nepalis – and our external partners – to continue to join hands in our journey and be part of the success story.”

common in the Nepalese diet.

We were short of funds, but we knew that supplements were cheap and could be a great investment in maternal and child health. The problem was that people were suspicious of government assurances that these pills were a good idea.

We knew the supplements weren't a magic bullet either. As in most low-income countries, our health care system also needed many expensive changes – better sanitation facilities, improved road access and water and power supplies, and many more trained medical personnel and emergency care facilities, just to begin – but we were determined to start

somewhere. The *amma samuha* propelled the process and made it happen.

We also focused on increasing overall access to maternal health services. We worked to encourage women to visit health centers for pre- and post-natal checkups and deliveries. We publicized an offer of small cash incentives to cover different transportation costs – 500 rupees in the plains areas, 1,000 in hilly areas and 1,500 in the rugged Himalayan region. Mothers who came in received a set of warm clothing for themselves and one for each child.

Since 2006 we have provided skilled birth attendants

at every level of the health system, with referrals to clinics for life-threatening pregnancy complications like pre-eclampsia and other emergencies. As a dental surgeon by training, I myself proposed the use of the oral antiseptic chlorhexidine for use on cut umbilical cords, and this proved so successful in reducing newborn mortality that Nepal is now manufacturing it for sale worldwide.

These were small but critical changes that created a nationwide holistic safe motherhood program, and our maternal mortality rate fell significantly, from 850 per thousand live births in 1992 to 170 in 2011.

We still have a long way to go, but Nepal is now among ten low- and middle-income countries on the “fast track” to meet the Millennium Development Goals related to reductions in child and maternal mortality by 2015.

Our experience and the key strategies we used are spotlighted in the new World Health Organization report *Nepal: Success Factors for Women's and Children's Health*: community ownership of the programs, women's involvement, collaboration across social and

economic sectors, respect for local cultures, accurate data collection, long-range and innovative thinking, and rights-based accountability, among other things.

Our interim constitution names health care as an explicit human right, for example, and recent Supreme Court rulings have therefore expanded community engagement and promoted better service delivery. Working together with several external development partners and local non-governmental organizations, the Ministry of Health and Population is striving to make our health care programs universal, affordable, accessible and socially acceptable. Our reward has been the saving of countless human lives.

We realize we have a long way to go in reducing inequities that exist between communities, but our record shows we are on the right track. We call upon all Nepalis – and our external partners – to continue to join hands in our journey and be part of the success story.

(This article originally appeared in the 'Impatient Optimist' blog series published in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation website.)

USAID'S 2014-2018 STRATEGY IN NEPAL

OVERARCHING GOAL
To foster “a more democratic, prosperous, and resilient Nepal.” USAID asserts that if selected institutions become more effective at delivering services, more adept at engaging citizens—and more responsive to their needs—and if communities’ economic, environmental and human capacity are strengthened, then Nepal will become more democratic, prosperous, and resilient.

STRATEGIC CHOICES
Approximately 75 percent of USAID Nepal’s funding resources are tied to President Obama’s Initiatives for Global Health, Feed the Future and Global Climate Change, with additional funds earmarked for basic education and biodiversity. In developing the new five-year strategy, the Mission conducted extensive consultations



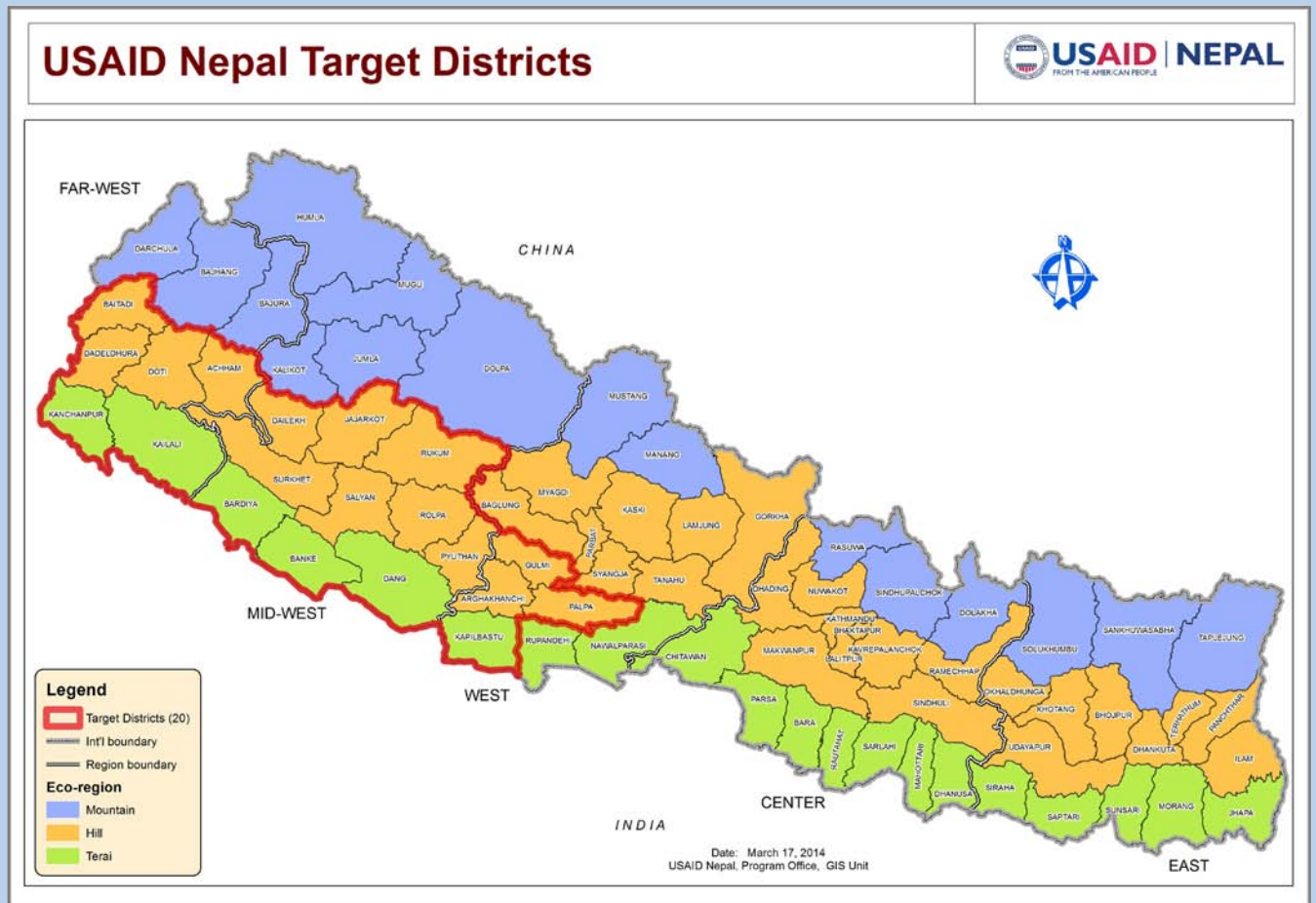
with Government of Nepal, private sector, civil society, U.S. government stakeholders, and others, and identified *good governance* as critical to achieving success in each of these sectors. Support to governance will result in sustainable impact through multi-sector efforts that build increasingly strong relationships with the Government of Nepal. **USAID/Nepal contends that U.S. foreign assistance is better secured through stronger Nepali institutions and their ability to implement sector programs.**

USAID will also focus efforts geographically to leverage its programs and relationships across sectors for better collaboration, especially locally. The expected results include greater transparency, government credibility, and public confidence in the targeted sectors. Except as required by the need to assist certain ecosystems, vulnerable populations, specific disease burdens, or coverage needs (especially for nutrition and HIV/AIDS), **USAID activities will be increasingly co-located within 20 core districts in the middle hills and the Terai portions of Nepal’s Far-Western, Mid-Western, and Western Development Regions.** This area has a higher level of poverty than the national average (32.5 percent vs. 25.2 percent nationwide) and a higher level of stunting (45.2 percent vs. 40.5 percent nationwide). The region is also typified by high population density, less developed infrastructure, and vulnerability to climate change, yet possesses significant unmet agricultural, economic and nature conservation potential.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE
USAID targets three Development Objectives (DOs) to contribute to achieving the overall goal:

1: More Inclusive And Effective Governance

Over the next five years, DO 1 will support increased inclusion of Nepalis in civic and



political life, and a government more capable of responding to rapidly increasing public demands, with an emphasis on meeting demands in Presidential Initiative sectors. USAID will focus and concentrate its local governance program to overlap with Presidential Initiative activities in districts of the Mid-West and Far-West regions. Activities in support of local governance will strengthen the sustainability of other sectors’ work and improve government effectiveness for better inclusion and response. These activities will contribute to the following expected results:

- The fulfillment of targeted mandates under the Comprehensive Peace Accord
- The inclusion of historically marginalized groups in leadership and decision-making positions in the executive and legislative branches of government
- Sustainable civic organizations that provide advocacy and oversight on social, economic, and political issues

- More effective expenditures at the national and local level in support of service delivery and public policy priorities

2: Inclusive And Sustainable Economic Growth To Reduce Extreme Poverty

To achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth, Nepal needs increased agriculture-based incomes, expanded small-scale enterprise opportunities, a liberal trade and investment climate, and a protected natural resource base—all supported by a strong policy and enabling environment. For Nepal’s economy, the real challenge will be to “graduate” to a higher growth trajectory by removing key bottlenecks to public and private investment. Each result achieved under this DO will contribute to the success of all economic growth activities. For example, because environmental resources are a common good, a certain level of economic stability is needed for a community to work together to manage those resources effectively. Also, successful businesses can provide private sector incentives to enhance agricultural production and marketing and create sustainable individual and community engagement in natural resource management. The extent to which there will be sustained and broad-based economic prosperity in Nepal is closely tied to the effective management and conservation of



natural resources in the country. Over the life of this strategy, USAID will contribute to the following results:

- The prevalence of extreme poverty (US \$1.25/day) reduced
- Micro, small and medium enterprises established or expanded
- Improved biophysical conditions in biologically significant areas and/or natural resources showing improved biophysical conditions
- Increased capacity of stakeholders to adapt to global climate change

3: Increased Human Capital



In the Thirteenth Three Year Plan, the GON identifies major problems in education, such as inadequate access to quality, basic education among children from poor and marginalized communities and the need for teacher training and curriculum. USAID will invest in improving basic education through the Ministry of Education and the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) which is responsible for planning, managing, financing, implementing and evaluating basic education reform programs. These activities will increase literacy for adults and improve the reading skills of children in grades one through three.

Similarly, in the Health and Nutrition sectors, the GON wants to ensure that

COMMUNITIES, PARKS AUTHORITIES, AND POLICE PUT THE BRAKES ON POACHING IN NEPAL

Understanding and sustaining Nepal's victory for tigers, rhinos, and elephants in 2013



Rhinos in the wetlands of the Namuna Buffer Zone Community Forest at Nawalparasi, Nepal.

PHOTO: WWF-NEPAL/KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

— **Andrew Tobiason**,
Biodiversity Advisor, Bureau for
Economic Growth, Education and
Environment, USAID/Washington

*(This article appeared as the cover story for a USAID
annual report to the U.S. Congress)*

On March 3, 2014, the first World Wildlife Day, while many countries were taking stock of the damage from one of the worst years on record for wildlife trafficking, Nepal declared a major victory: no tigers, rhinos, or elephants were poached during the year-long period ending in February 2014. Even more remarkable, Nepal also achieved a poaching-free year in 2011. This reprieve from hunting is having the desired effect: Between 2009 and 2013, Nepal's tiger population increased by 63 percent.

Nepal's zero-poaching milestone stems from robust management and monitoring of community forests, effective patrols of protected areas, diligence by the Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police to break down illegal wildlife trade networks, and heightened coordination among these groups. USAID supports the work of these groups through partners as varied as World Wildlife Fund (WWF), INTERPOL, and the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal—the largest civil society network in the country.

USAID's primary channel of support is Hariyo Ban, Nepali for "Green Forest." Implemented by WWF-Nepal in partnership with local organizations, Hariyo Ban aims to reduce threats to biodiversity, slow deforestation, and help communities adapt to climate change. The program centers on the Terai Arc and Chitwan-Annapurna Landscapes, home to the Bengal tiger, greater one-horned rhinoceros, Asian elephant, snow leopard, red panda, and more than 11 million people.

Community forests are more vulnerable to poaching than protected areas, where patrols are reinforced by the Nepalese Army. Thus Hariyo Ban helped to establish 125 Community Based Anti-Poaching Units in the community forests. Some 1,840 members—nearly a third of them women—patrol these forests and report suspected illegal activities. The units also use street drama,

pamphlets and posters, rallies, games, folk songs, and radio programs to engage the public. In return, unit volunteers get access to training in marketable skills like fish farming and repair of mobile phones, bikes, or electrical appliances. This approach is paying off: Management measurably improved in more than 1.3 million acres of biodiverse forest in 2013.

Asserting that three species were not impacted by poaching requires a high level of confidence in wildlife data. USAID contributed to improved monitoring accuracy by co-financing the 2013 national tiger census, in which partners WWF-Nepal and the National Trust for Nature Conservation worked with authorities to install and analyze images from almost 500 camera traps in five protected areas and three wildlife corridors in the Terai. The recorded increase from 121 to 198 individuals in just four years suggests that Nepal will double its tiger population ahead of the 2022 target set with India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Russia, and other tiger range states in 2010. USAID also supports identity-based monitoring of rhinos in parks, whereby every individual is recognized without the need for collars or tags and observed on a regular basis.

USAID also supports the use of genetic data for conservation. Over two years, the Nepal Tiger Genome Project collected 1,200 samples of carnivore scat to create a database of tiger genetic "fingerprints" with information on individual animals and the population as a whole. This non-invasive survey method validated the findings of the tiger census and showed where certain populations have reduced genetic diversity due to geographic isolation. Hariyo Ban is using the findings to target action in habitats essential to tigers and other wildlife.

While the frontline efforts of community patrols, park rangers, and police are prominent means of conserving wildlife, two decades of training in both the science and the business of sustainable forest management have generated invaluable local goodwill for conservation. Today, 18,000 forest user groups manage 4.4 million acres of forest, and 40 percent of Nepalis benefit from community forest management. Several groups earn substantial revenue from the sale of sustainably harvested medicinal plants, essential oils, and other non-timber

Continued ... on Page 7



to support clean water under (DO 2) natural resource management activities.

CROSS-CUTTING CONSIDERATIONS

1. Extreme Poverty: Inclusive poverty reductions in Nepal require coordinated and sustained efforts to improve the health, education, and livelihood opportunities of vulnerable and marginalized populations for the duration of the strategy period and onward. To graduate from least developed country (LDC) status by 2022, overall economic growth needs to accelerate from roughly 3 percent per capita to exceed an average of 5.3 percent per capita.

2. Resilience: USAID Nepal will address "resilience deficits" by targeting those most vulnerable to high levels of stunting and wasting, predictable food insecurity, severe access constraints, climate change and environmental risks, and faltering livelihoods. USAID's Food for Peace program will launch a Community Resilience Program which will strengthen livelihoods, improve nutritional status and increase the capacity of vulnerable households to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in communities with deep poverty and high rates of malnutrition.

3. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI): Understanding and carefully considering Nepal's unique and complex social structure is critical to achieving equitable socioeconomic development objectives. Under this CDCS, USAID/Nepal will: improve GESI analysis and data collection throughout the program cycle; increase engagement on GESI issues with the GON, donors, civil society, and other USG agencies; implement cross-sector activities to improve inclusive governance; deepen staff ability to identify and address GESI gaps; and emphasize ongoing learning and adaptation.

4. Youth: With 37 percent of Nepal's population under age 15, Youth play an important role in all USAID activities, and a number of USAID interventions—particularly in institutional capacity building (DO 1), health (DO 3), Feed the Future (DO 2), and environment (DO 2)—explicitly target youth. Under this CDCS, USAID/Nepal will seek to strengthen youth employment opportunities, healthy behaviors, and engagement in local and national governance.

5. Science, Technology, Innovation, & Partnerships:

USAID will increasingly



seek to use cutting-edge science and technology, innovative approaches, and new partnerships to achieve and scale up results more quickly and efficiently. In particular, the Mission will seek increased partnership with private sector, civil society, academic, and GON actors.

all citizens have equitable access to basic and good-quality health services. USAID will invest in the GON's implementation of the National Health Sector Plan under an arrangement with other donors that will pool and channel funding through the GON. All stakeholders plan and implement a single national five-year health strategy resulting in a single national annual work plan and budget, and a single results-based management plan with data collected from GON's health management information system and national population surveys.



Over the life of the strategy, USAID will contribute to the following results under this DO:

- Decrease in neonatal mortality rates in targeted districts
- Increase in Skilled Birth Attendance
- Increase Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
- Reduce the national stunting prevalence rate
- Increased literacy for adults (particularly women and marginalized groups) within the Feed the Future zone of influence
- Improved reading skills of children in grades one through three

These three Development Objectives are mutually reinforcing. Democracy depends on citizens' ability to place demands on government and hold it accountable. Economic growth requires a healthy and educated population to take advantage of opportunities in an ever more sophisticated global economic environment. And democratic systems require an educated and empowered population. Because the DOs are so interconnected and because the Mission's approach will emphasize the integration of cross-sector development and governance to achieve sustainable results—development activities designed under this strategy may support results under multiple DOs. For example, USAID's Global Health Initiative (DO 3) may contribute expertise, planning and funding

CULTIVATING PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVED AGRICULTURE PRODUCTIVITY



An agriculture officer provides practical training to the women literacy graduates on how to effectively handle and transplant seedling on the field.

PHOTO: USAID

USAID's flagship Feed the Future project in Nepal, the Knowledge-based Intervention for Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition (KISAN) project, is poised to impact the lives of 160,000 smallholder Nepali farm households. KISAN translates to 'farmer' in Nepali. Since 2013, the project is working with farmers in 20 districts across the Mid and Far Western regions to improve agriculture productivity and incomes through enhanced services and technologies along the high-value vegetable, rice, maize,

and lentil value chains. The project liaises closely with the Ministry of Agriculture Development (MOAD) and Departments at the national and field levels, and works to foster ownership of activities and mobilize government expertise to disburse GoN grants to KISAN beneficiary communities.

The project is a robust example of USAID's partnership with Government of Nepal institutions. By working through GoN systems and people – people who have the cultural knowledge and in-country expertise

to ensure assistance leads to sustainable growth – our goal is to also strengthen GoN capacity to eventually implement these activities independently.

Last month, we caught up with the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Development, **Dr. Rajendra Adhikari**, who was kind enough to share some of his thoughts on the USAID-GoN partnership and insights on the way forward for agriculture development in the country.

Excerpts from the Interview:

Although two years is a short time span to evaluate a project, the feedback I've been receiving about USAID's KISAN project and lessons learned has been positive.

What role do you envision for the private sector to help improve Nepal's agriculture productivity and how can organizations like USAID help facilitate the process?

The private sector is a key stakeholder in Nepal's agriculture development, but I hold the view that it can work efficiently only when it has the requisite capacity to perform. While the government needs to draw on the private sector's strength, the focus should also be on building and enhancing the private sector's capacity so that they can perform better and deliver their services. Second, as farmers also constitute the private sector, they should also be included in the definition of the private sector.

There is a saying: "A chain is as strong as its weakest link." Without empowering farmers who are undoubtedly the most important stakeholder of agricultural value chains, you cannot expect to strengthen the chain. The 'empowered' private sector and others need to focus on strengthening farmers so that the chain's collective strength is in a better position.

And third, we need to identify who the private sector partners to engage with are, assess their competencies, and leverage their specialization accordingly. For example, if someone is an input supplier, encourage them to specialize in that; build confidence in their strengths so that they do not wander horizontally and try to integrate as a producer and processor as well.

Nepal recently released its new Agriculture Development Strategy. How can external development partners like USAID best contribute to the implementation of the strategy?

The ADS is a national policy document drafted after extensive consultations with our many development partners. All development partners should own it as the national agriculture policy of Nepal. The first responsibility of external development partners is to commit the resources required for the implementation of that policy. Their second responsibility would be to ensure that their agriculture priorities for Nepal are in line with the ADS so that they're directly supporting implementation of the national policy.

Development partners like USAID can also support the implementation of a strategy like the ADS by sharing their expertise from across the world. Unlike us in the Government, who for the most part operate in and look at agriculture development from a strictly Nepal lens, development partners bring insights from having worked in multiple contexts (and not just Nepal). The lessons that a Nepali farmer eventually learns over many years through repeated trial and error can be significantly accelerated by the development partner because they've already done the exact same thing somewhere else.

USAID and MOAD have a longstanding history of close collaboration, especially at the



Dr. Rajendra Adhikari
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Development

What is your general perspective on agriculture and USAID support in this sector?

The government policy clearly lays down the agriculture development challenges and priorities of the country – we have no doubt that concerted efforts from the broad development community – government, private sector and the cooperatives, donor agencies, INGOs, and NGOs – is needed. Organizations like USAID, for instance, played a pivotal role in introducing and developing various developmental/technological packages, like the agriculture value-chain approach, of focusing on the demand-side of the market and not just on production. The approach to building market access and strengthening



HEERA KUMARI BHATTI, DAUGHTER OF USAID'S PROJECT FARMER PARBATI DEVI, PICKS TOMATOES FROM A PLASTIC GREENHOUSE IN ASSIGRAM, DADELADHURA. PLASTIC GREENHOUSES ARE USED TO GROW HIGH-VALUE VEGETABLES SUCH AS TOMATOES, CUCUMBER, AND LETTUCE DURING THE OFF SEASON. THE 5X10 METER GREENHOUSE WITH A DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM PRODUCES ABOUT 600 KILOGRAMS OF HIGH-QUALITY TOMATOES PER CROP CYCLE, WORTH ABOUT \$250. HEERA IS A NURSING STUDENT AND HELPS ON THE FAMILY FARM WHEN SHE IS HOME.

PHOTO: FINTRAC INC.

all actors along the value chain brought a paradigm shift in the agriculture sector. USAID was central in these efforts.

Today, from what I've seen, USAID's focus is on increasing private sector strengthening/engagement in agriculture, while also working closely with the government. Through KISAN, USAID and the MOAD have worked together

to establish a common mechanism to coordinate planning, implementation and monitoring of a big agriculture project; this is important to reduce duplication of efforts and to maximize resources. Because of this, we have been able to broaden the scope and the scale of what we could have achieved only with the GON resources.

Local level. Does MOAD have any suggestions on how to make this partnership more effective and meaningful?

In the context of development projects, there are two ways to build and maintain strong coordination – structural and functional mechanisms. With KISAN, for instance, we have a structural mechanism in place with representation from all the stakeholders – MOAD, USAID, and KISAN project – that provides space to meet and discuss the project’s strategy and implementation plans. Now, the functional coordination mechanism, like the name suggests is ‘function’ oriented and specific to the planning, implementation, and review stages of the project. For example, during the planning stage of KISAN, there was joint planning at the field level. The project worked closely with the MOAD-managed Agriculture and Food Security Project (funded by the World Bank) even prior to selecting beneficiaries at the VDC level. We decided at the advisory committee meeting of KISAN that, although it does not directly support the government’s agriculture programs, the project’s activities and budget would be reflected in the programs of the local agriculture development offices. We are also jointly conducting a review of the project later this month. Collaboration of this nature is natural since we have the same objectives.

And because we’re collaborating so closely, we have found innovative ways of implementing programs. Assimilating multiple perspectives during our meetings encourages what I call co-innovation, meaning collaboration innovation: innovation in ideas, not just in products. And that is important.

Working within the government’s budget system is another way of strengthening coordination. It is my hope and earnest request to our development partners to look into this area more. Another way would be to enhance the capacity of government and create public goods through the government system. The core competencies of the government and development partners will create synergy, and it is important that they present themselves as a single entity before the beneficiaries. In order to achieve this, there have to be two-way exchanges. The stronger the coordination is at the central level, the coordination of the field level actors like farmers, input suppliers, traders and wholesalers will also be stronger - this hypothesis is backed by research.

Let me share with you research about value chain improvement. The efficiency of the value chain depends on the collaboration of value chain actors - farmers, input suppliers, traders, wholesalers, processors - who all belong to the private sector. Without the facilitation of the government or development



USAID-funded water pump helps small farmers improve irrigation and resilience to climate change impacts from increasingly unpredictable onset of monsoon rains.

PHOTO: FINTRAC INC.

partners, they are not in a position to collaborate, as there are conflicting interests amongst these actors. For example, farmers and traders have different interests, and other groups have the same issue. When there is a strong collaboration between the government and the development partners, we have seen strong collaboration of these actors and vice versa.

What recommendations does MOAD have on scaling up some of the best practices Nepal has seen in agriculture development?

One of the important indicators of a successful program is that it will be naturally accepted by the program beneficiaries, meaning scale-up will be a logical progression of events. We have numerous examples of scaling up and scaling out programs at a bigger level. Scaling up is implementing the program in the same community at a bigger scale while scaling out is implementing the program in a different context.

For instance, the Swiss Development Cooperation first implemented the Sustainable Soil Management Program in a few districts, and the government implemented the same program in several

more. The interventions introduced by the USAID-funded Market Access for Rural Development or MARD program in 1997 – 2002, helped expand markets, participation of farmers, and agro-entrepreneurs in high-value commodity production and marketing, and improved the nutritional status of farm households. The MOAD took the lessons and best practices from this project and has since replicated and expanded the efforts in many other districts. I see the learnings from USAID’s agriculture value chain development experience from over the years reflected in the ongoing KISAN project as well.

In your perspective, what are the top three priorities that Nepal should focus on to improve its agriculture sector and to help end extreme poverty?

I would say that food and nutrition security is a top priority. We need more integrated and inclusive projects that will help meet that goal. Second is value chain development, under which industrialization in agriculture, export promotion and import substitution are key issues to deal with. We need to work on substituting imports where we have core competencies. Third,

capacity development – human resources and infrastructure development – along with creation of an enabling environment. In a geographically challenged country like Nepal, infrastructure development needs to continue to be a focus.

What would be useful for all of us in the agriculture sector is an innovation forum that provides space for all the different Nepali actors to brainstorm ideas, learn, and network; a public policy dialogue platform to discuss issues at various stages. For instance, if you take the example of Toyota’s practice the culture of quality circle – a space for their employees to come together regularly to focus on and discuss new ideas that will improve the quality of their services and how best to take the idea further for research and implementation. We need a broadly owned policy and thematic dialogue space to spur innovation.

Research is also a priority. The innovation forum can also help us identify relevant ideas for research that help improve productivity. The ideas for enhancement in productivity should not only reach the wider community but there should be capable human resource to put that in practice.

Continued ‘Communities’ from page 5

forest products, while communities near protected areas receive 30 to 50 percent of the proceeds from park entry fees. Hariyo Ban is working with select forest user groups to help sustain and expand these benefits while guarding against misappropriation of community funds through participatory, public audits—an essential part of community conservation.

Nepal’s human-centered approach to conservation offers important lessons for other countries where people and large wildlife coexist. As host of the South Asian Wildlife Network, Nepal has a unique opportunity to lead by example and through assistance to its

peers in nearby wildlife strongholds like India, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. Globally, Nepal’s ability to defy the odds on wildlife crime demonstrates the value of a comprehensive response to poaching and trafficking that relies on incentives and intelligence, involving both communities and crime fighters.

In December 2012, while community patrol units were established in rural areas and parks geared up for the tiger census, members of Nepal’s police forces received specialized training from INTERPOL in combating environmental crime. The training, part of the USAID-supported Project Predator program, focused on illegal poaching and trade in tigers. Participants learned about



PHOTO: WWF-NEPAL/NABIN BARAL

For Community anti-poaching patrols in Nepal, like this one monitoring tiger and rhino habitat in Shiva Community Forest near Bardia National Park, deter hunting and other illegal activities by removing snares and reporting violations to authorities.

investigation techniques, concealment methods, questioning wildlife smugglers, tracking illicit goods to major buyers, and using INTERPOL’s system of notices.

In January 2013, Nepalese authorities applied skills from INTERPOL and other training to make a string of arrests and seizures across the country. Six men en route to China, who together had seven tiger skins and 167 kg of tiger bones, were captured. The six smugglers faced fines equivalent to \$500 to \$1,000, five to ten years in prison, or both. Across tiger range states, similar training by INTERPOL contributed to enforcement operations leading to more than 50 arrests and the seizure of 40 live tigers, as well as tiger parts and other wildlife products.

INVESTING IN BUSINESS LITERACY TO EMPOWER VULNERABLE NEPALIS AND HELP END EXTREME POVERTY



It Doesn't Have to Be This Way

At USAID, we've learned how much more effective trainings in life skills such as entrepreneurship, literacy, numeracy, and basic health and nutrition can be when combined with training in agriculture. The combination helps break down the vicious cycle of poverty.

For instance, from 2008 to 2012, a USAID project worked with 54,000 farmers—82 percent of them women—in all 15 districts of Nepal's Mid-West region, more than doubling their incomes on average. The project provided training to historically marginalized and disadvantaged individuals, especially youth and women, and created a more productive workforce.

We've seen integrated training make enormous contributions to people's sense of empowerment. The impact on women is especially profound. From my time in

Rina Chaudhary, a former Kamalari (bonded laborer), clutches her USAID literature textbook outside the classroom. She is a graduate of the Education for Income Generation program's Business Literacy and Agriculture Productivity Training. Once entirely dependent on her husband's income, she now earns enough to support the family and her husband's income can be designated as savings. Rina also takes great pride in finally being able to help her 2nd grade daughter with homework, and is determined to expand her agriculture enterprise.

PHOTO: USAID

– Dr. Beth Dunford,
USAID Nepal Mission Director

Reaping the Benefits of Education

Let me tell you the story of Rina Chaudhary. From a rural village in Dang district in Nepal's Mid-Western region, Rina was sold into forced labor as a little girl. 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 told us. From 2008 to 2012, Rina received training in entrepreneurial literacy and agriculture productivity training. Now a proud owner of a booming vegetable business, Rina's earnings have more than doubled and her ambitions continue to soar. Rina was one of the 32,000 people in Nepal's mid-western region trained by USAID. You can hear more about her story here.

Education empowers. And when you tailor education to provide functional, entrepreneurial literacy and access to income generation opportunities, the outcomes are more contagious and compelling; particularly for the most vulnerable populations and communities – women, youth, the marginalized and the poor.

To build on previous efforts and expand on trainings that empower women, youth and marginalized communities, USAID recently launched its new Business Literacy project. Part of the U.S. Government's larger five-year, \$66 million Feed the Future Initiative in Nepal, the project is designed to build the skills of 48,000 additional Nepalis in the West, Mid-West and Far-West regions of the country in literacy, numeracy, entrepreneurship, financial management, nutrition, and life skills. These skills are fundamental to helping people move out of poverty.

The Need to Invest in Business Literacy in Nepal

Structural barriers, both economic and social, preclude many Nepalis from accessing education—both formal and non-formal—leaving them with few opportunities to build a productive livelihood. Every year, more than 550,000 Nepali youth – who make up more than 50 percent of the country's population – join the ranks of those looking for work, with many either striving to go abroad as unskilled labor or languishing as part of the unproductive workforce.

For a country that just began providing access to education in the 1950s, literacy rates have improved drastically in Nepal. But with approximately one third of Nepali women – and a much higher percentage among Dalits and in the Terai – illiterate, much work still remains. The

Business Literacy project will support the Government of Nepal's priority of eradicating illiteracy from the country by 2015. It will also support the government's efforts to end extreme poverty.

In a country of around 30 million people, every day a staggering 8 million Nepalis are forced to get by on less than \$1.25 a day. For them, every decision is a trade-off with potentially catastrophic consequences. Do you buy medicines for a sick parent, provide an evening meal for your children, or put a few pennies away towards a new roof or next year's school fees? Many are forced to choose between food and medicines over education, thus taking away the chance for their children to climb out of poverty. Extreme poverty forces people to make unimaginable decisions about food, medicine, housing and education.



Nepal, I have seen, heard, and read about the impact of integrated entrepreneurial literacy and income generation efforts on so many of our women beneficiaries. Once entirely dependent on their husband's income, women now earn enough to even designate one of the spouse's income as savings; they take great pride in being able to now send their children to schools and help their children with homework; and they are determined to expand their agriculture enterprises. Many women are able to triple and quadruple their incomes—in some cases so significantly that their husbands have found it more attractive to return from their overseas jobs and help them run their farms.

These are important successes, and it is important to build on them.

USAID's five-year strategy in Nepal aims to foster "a more democratic, prosperous, and resilient Nepal". Our work in Nepal is founded on the premise that if selected institutions become more effective at delivering services, more adept at engaging citizens—and more responsive to their needs—and if communities' economic, environmental and human capacity are strengthened, then Nepal will become more democratic, prosperous, and resilient.

The Business Literacy project, in conjunction with our larger Feed the Future initiative is designed to help us move closer to that goal.

Last month, on July 18, 2014, as we launched the Business Literacy project, I had the pleasure and honor of joining Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Nepal's Minister of Finance at the event. Both of us agreed that in order to maximize on Nepal's recent gains in peace and security, the country's focus—in addition to drafting a constitution—must be on promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth. We know that no matter where the political winds blow, growing the economy and creating jobs will remain critical to Nepal's future.

TRANSFORMING LIVES

ACCESS TO CITIZENSHIP AND VOTING RIGHTS KEY TO EMPOWERING THE MOST VULNERABLE NEPALIS

Bhagirathi Jhora, 37, of Shreepur village in Kailali district, one of the shortest women in Nepal, was among the 80 percent Nepalis who voted in the historic 2013 Constituent Assembly (CA) election. The experience was a huge win for Jhora: it was the first time she had exercised her democratic voting rights as a citizen and also her first self-led venture out of home for any kind of civic participation; a drastic change from being confined at home due to her physical disability and inaccessible environment.

Today, Jhora is an active member of a community group advocating for disability rights. She recently also received her citizenship certificate and disability ID card. These cards give her the legal grounds to finally seek and receive disability allowance from her Village Development Committee. Persons with disabilities are among the most excluded in Nepal. In November 2013, along with Jhora, 1,051 persons with disability – across 120 VDCs of six districts – were able to register and vote for the first time with support from the USAID-funded Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes project.

Jhora was fortunate. There are still thousands of persons with disabilities who have no access to any form of government service. For them, exercising civic, electoral, and political rights is just a dream. Recognizing this, the project, implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES), worked closely with the Election Commission Nepal to organize community-level voter education programs and targeted voter outreach and advocacy across the



A woman with disability is part of a mock polling exercise in the lead up to the November 19, 2013, Constituent Assembly. The exercise was part of the voter education and registration drive, targeted towards the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, conducted by the Election Commission Nepal with support from USAID's partners like IFES. Through the Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes (SPPELP) project, USAID strives to restore public confidence in democratic processes and institutions and to promote greater political participation of marginalized populations, like people living with disability.

country. The program identified the legal framework to target this population, shifted resources for outreach, and identified local partners representing people with disabilities. To fully internalize and integrate disability inclusion into its own operations, the project hired two persons with disabilities and asked their partners to do the same. Led by the project team, the staff helped add a new disability lens to project planning, outreach, and implementation in 32 districts. District-level government officials were trained to support the electoral, political participation of persons with disabilities and 120 disability inclusive groups were trained to promote their civic, political and electoral rights.

Jhora's case is an illustration of how one can overcome even the most difficult 'attitudinal' and 'environmental' barriers. Educating persons with disabilities, their families and the community as a

whole on disability issues and rights was crucial to changing attitudes, while facilitating access to key state services such as citizenship card and voter registration was important to break environmental hurdles. To fully mainstream persons with disabilities into political and social life, the State, however, would need to show greater commitment. Sustained advocacy was therefore key, and the project formed community-based advocacy forums and lobbied with the local state structures and the Election Commission.

The Election Commission rose to the challenge. During the 2013 CA election, the Commission made important provisions to facilitate voting by persons with disabilities: 50 polling locations – 49 across the country and one at the Election Commission Nepal – were made accessible; transportation services were provided; priority in queuing to vote was allowed, along with

using support from a trusted person to cast vote. The project disseminated disability-focused and friendly voter education materials, including braille leaflets, while the National Federation of the Disabled, Nepal, one of the project's sub-grantees, deployed 125 persons with disabilities across 17 districts to monitor access to elections for persons with disabilities. This was the first ever monitoring of elections in Nepal from the disability perspective.

On Election Day, a total of 5,714 persons with disabilities from project districts (120 VDCs) cast their vote – a number previously unheard of.

Highlighting the project's best practices and lessons learned at a recent event in Kathmandu organized by USAID's Democracy and Governance Office for other development partners, Suraj Sigdel, Project Officer at IFES Nepal, shared, "Mainstreaming disability is more about commitment and good planning than about costs. Conscious efforts will go a long way in empowering the most marginalized community in Nepal." The project even roped in its existing partner civil society organizations (CSOs), working to promote civic, political and electoral participation of other marginalized communities such as women, Dalit, freed Kamaiya, Muslim communities, and urban youth, as vehicles to promote disability inclusion. The CSOs were trained on disability issues and motivated to mainstream disability into their existing operations, with data on persons with disabilities made an integral part of their monitoring and evaluation.

In Kathmandu, the Election Commission continues to display its commitment to gender and

social inclusion. The Commission's Gender Policy, implemented since September 2013, led to the establishment of a Gender and Social Inclusion Unit in March 2014. The GESI unit is represented by Tika Devi Dahal, an activist and a woman with disability. Speaking of the ECN's disability inclusive GESI initiatives, she remarked, "I look forward to putting my best effort to make the electoral process of Nepal disable friendly. It is my hope that other Nepalis with disabilities, currently deprived of their civic, political, and electoral rights, are sooner rather than later able to exercise their fundamental democratic voting rights." Joint Secretary of the Commission, Bir Bahadur Rai, echoed the Commission's commitment to make at least one polling station per electoral constituency disability friendly within the next five years and to reach out to more affected populations with disability focused voter education and information materials.

"As the country starts preparing for local elections, USAID and its partners will continue to work on disability inclusion with the Elections Commission, and can hopefully replicate these efforts with other Government and non-government actors," reinforced Director of the Democracy and Governance Office at USAID Nepal Maria Barron.

Meanwhile for people like Jhora, being able to vote in the CA election of November 2013 was a huge win for more reasons than one. "I want to run my own business, be financially independent and contribute to my family income in the future," she said. Happiness aside, her newfound confidence is an inspiration for thousands of other Nepalis.

SNAPSHOT



PHOTO: THE ASIA FOUNDATION

Community orientation held under the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program

Fifteen years after being sold for sex work in India, Birani (pseudo name) returned home to Makwanpur district in November 2011. Birani found her freedom but, afraid of social stigma, she could neither share her story nor pursue a legal case against her traffickers. Three years on, in May 2013, she finally broke free from all chains as she watched her traffickers receive a 20-year prison sentence.

Birani's decision to speak up and file a case against her traffickers came in April 2012 after attending an orientation on Nepal's anti-human trafficking law and participating in a discourse on the stigma and discrimination associated with human trafficking. Empowered to challenge social values that stigmatize and blame the trafficking survivor, she found the strength to take action against her perpetrators. The orientation that Birani

JUSTICE AFTER TWO DECADES

attended was organized by the USAID-funded Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) project, which, since 2010, has worked to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute human traffickers in six of Nepal's most trafficking-prone districts.

With support from the project, Birani filed a case under the 2007 Human Trafficking and Transportation Act at the District's police office. The project-supported district lawyers from two local NGOs – Forum for Protection of People's Rights Nepal and Legal Aid and Consultancy Center – helped strengthen Birani's legal case. They collected necessary testimonies and supported the district attorney in collecting the victim witness testimony and preparing and delivering the pleading note for the case. In May 2013, the District Court not only convicted the three traffickers, sentencing them each to a 20-year prison term, but also fined them \$200 each as compensation that will go to Birani. In a country with a per capita income of \$700 and where 25 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty, the \$600 Birani will receive is almost a year's income.

One year later, in May 2014, the Appellate Court of Makwanpur upheld the district court's decision. This was a landmark

USAID Support Leads to Landmark Judgment on Organ Trafficking

Kathmandu District Court passed a landmark judgment on organ trafficking under the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007. The District Court convicted two perpetrators with ten years of imprisonment and a fine of Nepali Rupees 200,000 each (about US\$2,100). The court further decided to compensate the survivor with Nepali Rupees 200,000. With support from the USAID-funded Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) project, local NGO Forum for Protection of People's Rights Nepal provided legal counseling, legal aid, and court representation to the survivor since the case started in May 2013 when the project assisted the survivor to file a first information report. The judgment is a judicial milestone, using the existing anti-trafficking legal provisions and an expanded framework to establish a link between exploitation, deception, and human trafficking in acts to extract human organs. One of the perpetrators was also charged for a second kidney trafficking case in Kavre District Court filed in 2012. In a country where justice still eludes victims of sexual trafficking, this is an important conviction for a form of human trafficking that is still evolving and new to Nepal. The CTIP project, since 2010, has worked to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute human traffickers in six of Nepal's most trafficking-prone districts.

judgment in Nepal's judicial history, with the district judge upholding the victim's right to 'adequate compensation.' The judge also interpreted the rules of providing compensation to include support from the government's victim assistance Rehabilitation Fund. In a country where state funds are rarely offered as compensation to victims of human trafficking, this case has set a new precedent in Nepal.

Since 2011, USAID trainings have directly

contributed to 48 convictions—and 3 landmark cases. Despite this success, many survivors remain challenged to exercise their right to justice due to social and financial barriers, lack of legal knowledge, and fear of the justice system. The USAID-funded project aims to reduce these barriers by increasing survivors' awareness and access to legal services and improving the justice sector's application of rights-based and victim-centered jurisprudence through trainings.

STANDING UP FOR THE HEALTH AND NUTRITION OF CHILDREN

The USAID-funded Suaahara Project is empowering families to raise healthy children

When Phulmaya Tamang, 28, from Rasuwa district, north west of Kathmandu, delivered her first child, she lost a lot of blood and nearly died. Strenuous work and poor diet had left Phulmaya weak and exhausted. “Everyday even when pregnant, I used to break my back working in the fields,” says Phulmaya.

With her husband working abroad, Phulmaya was living alone with her in-laws. “My in-laws were very orthodox and restrictive in how I could raise my child. I had to feed my son multi-grained porridge when he was just five days old and never got to properly breastfeed him as I was always sent to work in the fields,” reflects Phulmaya. As her son, Pasang, grew, she was even prohibited from feeding him eggs because her mother-in-law insisted that they would spoil his brain. “I look at my son today and feel sad.” Phulmaya reflects that he did not receive the nutrition he needed to have the healthiest possible start in life.

In Nepal, four in 10 children under five years of age do not reach their full potential due to stunting. Stunting, or reduced growth, is the result of both child and maternal under nutrition that leads to not just lost height but impaired brain development – resulting in serious health, social and economic consequences. The USAID-funded Suaahara project, meaning “Good Nutrition” in Nepali, supports the Government of Nepal’s multi-sector nutrition plan. Since 2011, working in 25



PHOTO: PALLAVI DHAKAL/SUAAHARA

“I left my in-laws’ home to ensure I could make decisions that would give my second child the chance for the healthiest possible start in life.”

- Phulmaya Tamang, 28, thousand day mother from Rasuwa, Nepal

districts and expanding to an additional 16, the project teaches simple, vital behavior changes in terms of health, hygiene and nutrition to promote a lifetime of good health for communities, families, mothers and their children –

helping produce a healthier generation that reaches its full potential.

In 2013, when Phulmaya got pregnant for the second time, she took a drastic step rarely taken by women in Nepal. She decided to move-out from her in-laws’ home and live with her sister. The timing was fortuitous. The Suaahara project was operating in her district and offering women training on how to take care and ensure optimal health and nutritional behavior of their young babies and themselves. The 1,000 days between a woman’s pregnancy and her child’s second birthday is an

important period. Good nutrition during this period is crucial to set the stage for a child’s cognitive development, lifelong health and productivity. Phulmaya was 7-months pregnant when she participated in Suaahara’s training. She learned about the importance of a diverse, nutritious diet and extra meals for expectant mothers, exclusive breastfeeding, timely introduction of complementary foods after six months, hygiene and sanitation, and ante-natal and post-natal health checkups. In addition, project staff helped her put her new knowledge into action by facilitating proper breastfeeding and food preparation demonstrations. “Anu, my second child, is now nine months old and does not fall sick as often as her brother. She loves eating eggs and, contrary to what my mother-in-law said, she is very smart.”

In addition to the training, Phulmaya participates actively in mother’s group meetings facilitated by Suaahara staff and receives one-on-one counseling. During the mother’s group meetings, Phulmaya is able to also listen to a popular radio program, sponsored by Suaahara, called *Bhanchhin Aama* or “Mother Knows Best”. This radio program is used to engage and reinforce behavior change messages among pregnant women and new mothers.

“I want my children to be educated and independent so that they can make their own decisions in life and live life their own way freely,” she shares.

THE HANDSHAKE THAT COULD REFORM HEALTH CARE IN NEPAL

How technical assistance (and persistence) led to real change



PHOTO: HEALTH FOR LIFE

The Ministry of Health and Population faced a dilemma: it had significantly reduced maternal, under-5, child and infant mortality rates—achieving the corresponding Millennium Development Goals ahead of schedule—but other issues stubbornly endured. Newborn mortality remained high, inequalities in access to and use of basic health care continued to be largely determined by caste and ethnicity, and early marriage and gender-based violence were widespread. These persistent, complex problems, and others, continued to affect the public health of many communities, impacting millions of people every day.

It became increasingly clear that if the Government of Nepal was to address the many root causes of public health issues, then multiple sectors would have to work together. A national collaborative framework, supported by various ministries, would help to ensure that health is a priority in every village’s local development agenda.

On December 1, 2013, the Ministry of Health and Population signed a historic collaborative agreement with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). It marks the first time that a formal agreement has been reached between two ministries in Nepal and sets into practice one of the most dramatic and promising reforms to the Nepali health sector in recent memory. After USAID’s Health for Life project brokered a series of high-level meetings and supported the drafting of the national framework, the two ministries agreed to align their activities to achieve common goals by giving greater authority to the community.

For the first time, public health will be integrated into MoFALD’s existing local platform for discussing and planning development in the community, linking it to other sectors such as women’s empowerment, education, and water & sanitation. This is important because not only are local systems more responsive to local needs, they are also more accountable and give the community greater flexibility in allocating resources to where they are needed most. The end result will be better, more equitable health services, particularly for marginalized groups.

Response to the agreement has been overwhelmingly positive. In July 2014 the two ministries signed the implementation guidelines, a major step towards making this collaboration a reality on the ground;



PHOTO: SUHAARA

a month later the collaborative approach officially became part of Nepal’s national health policy. The MoFALD Secretary commented that the framework and guidelines represent a pioneering effort that should be expanded to other sectors, and the MoHP Secretary stated that the collaboration and decentralization speaks to the health sector’s future in Nepal.

The signing of this agreement between the Ministry of Health and Population and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development marks a new era for Nepal and grows from the tireless efforts of many players. Expectations are high, but so is the hope that this collaboration will bring meaningful and sustainable improvements to the health of Nepal’s people.

DECONSTRUCT: CLIMATE CHANGE: RECONSTRUCT

Nepal is ranked as one of the world's most climate vulnerable country. With increasing effects of climate change being noted or implicated in various aspects of the Nepali life, in both its economic sectors and development goals, the time has never been more critical than now to communicate climate change better to the public and policy makers. This year, in celebration of Earth Day, 22 April 2014, and Environment Day, 5 June 2014,

USAID, the U.S. Embassy, and the Hariyo Ban Program joined hands to organize an info-graphic contest on climate change. Info-graphic, a visual graphic tool that breaks down complex data, is now a popular way to engage and inform the general public about critical issues that were otherwise originally produced in dense report formats.

Also, this year, the theme of Earth Day was climate

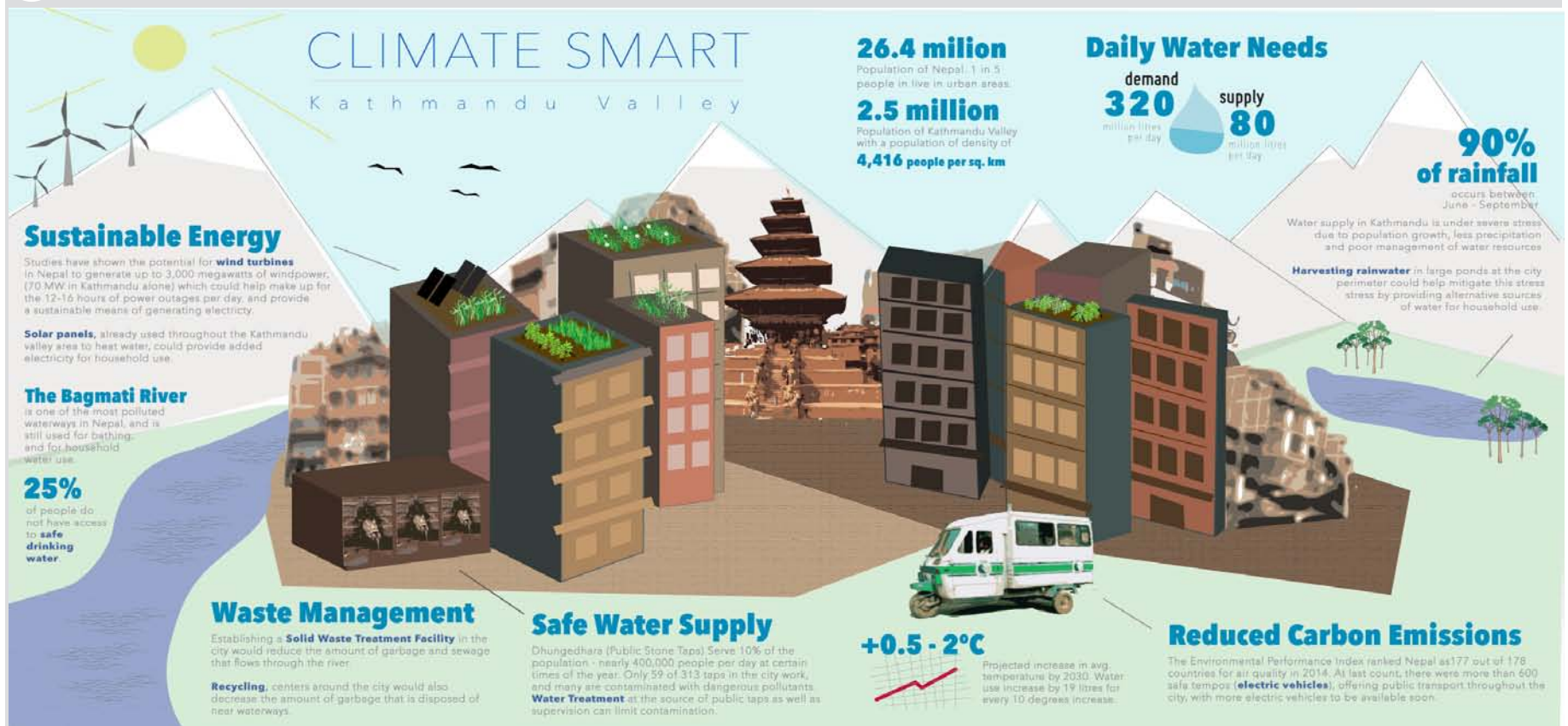
resilient cities and urban centers. Nepal is the fastest urbanizing country in South Asia. It is critical that the country engages in a discourse on how we make this transition as climate resilient as possible. Contested were invited to develop and submit info-graphics – one or a series – that explained climate change in the Nepali context.

Here are the top two winners:

1 BIDHAN RAJBHANDARI, WINNER



2 ANKIT DHAKAL



Continued 'Resilience is Essential to Win The Fight against Poverty' from page 2

career in Nepal. Out of a thirty-year career, I have spent nine years in Nepal. This is my third tour here, and I have seen so much progress in so many areas. For example, Nepal is one of only a few countries on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for maternal health, infant mortality, and universal education. Nepal is also cementing its peace process and institutionalizing a stable government after last year's free, fair, and inclusive elections. These are no small accomplishments. These are incredible accomplishments.

It is critical that we protect this progress, and support future growth, by investing in resilience. This means ensuring that people at all levels—from the vegetable farmer in Surkhet, to the Community Forest User Group in Bardiya, to the urban planners here in Kathmandu—have a plan and the resources to deal with an economic dislocation, a natural disaster, a disease outbreak, or any other kind of shocks.

Development can be so much stronger if we prepare for these kinds of shocks before they hit. A farmer with crop insurance, who has a bank account and access to credit, and who uses proven techniques and improved seeds, can bounce back from a year of drought. A district with a disaster management plan in place and access to an early warning system can act to save lives when floods strike. A company that constructs seismically sound buildings and creates a business continuity plan can quickly return to operations after



U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Bodde speaking at the event. PHOTO: USAID

a disaster.

Resilience is essential if we are to win the fight against poverty. We know we cannot prevent floods and landslides, but we can work much harder, smarter and more strategically to ensure these shocks don't devastate families or set back hard-won development gains.

This kind of resilience results from thoughtful planning, careful investment, and collaboration between government, donors, civil society, and the private sector. Today's Resilience Summit has been a chance to spur this kind of thinking and collaborating. The next step is to start putting it into action. No country in the world is better at developing plans than Nepal. And we in the donor community are pretty good at it, too. But plans are just plans. Action is necessary. Resilience should be part and parcel of everything that we do. It's all about day-to-day life.

The lamp that Dr. Pokhrel and I just lit represents the collaboration

required to achieve our goals. The saplings that we watered symbolize resilience: If their roots are strong and they receive the proper nourishment, then storms may bend them, but they will not break. They will grow stronger and more beautiful.

The United States Government is proud to support the people of Nepal and all of you in your efforts to make Nepal more prosperous and resilient. We look forward to working with you in the months and years to come as we help families and communities become better able to adapt to whatever challenges come their way.

Over the past 60 years, the American people have given Nepal \$1.2 billion in development assistance. We want to continue to support the people of Nepal in building a prosperous, economically sustainable future. Let's protect the progress Nepal has made with a focused effort on resilience.

- **U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Bodde**

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partnership with all of Kathmandu's 15 elected Parliamentarians and local government bodies, I've helped start a campaign called Livable Kathmandu, which is a concerted effort towards the sustainable development of Kathmandu Valley. With a rapidly growing population, Kathmandu is expected to have a population of about 6 million by FY 2035. With such projections, there is a dire need for well-planned and coordinated urbanization of the city. Livable Kathmandu provides a bi-monthly platform to discuss some of the more poignant issues, starting with waste management, water availability, air pollution, sewage, energy and transportation, which need to be addressed in order to create a Kathmandu that we can be proud of and can thrive economically and socially.

Having said that, rural Nepal continues to face immediate challenges too – one of which is the agriculture sector. This season Nepal's paddy output is expected to drop at least 18 percent due to damage caused by landslides and floods, making this fiscal year's targeted 6 percent growth unachievable. On top of that, a late and dry start to the monsoon had already been a cause for deep concern. Agriculture continues to contribute 35% of our GDP. And economics aside, as a country with

more than 3 million people who are food insecure, and as a country that continues to deal with issues of nutrition, our agriculture sector holds a lot more importance. And so in my Committee, I am actively working to figure out how Nepal's agriculture future can be not just about volume, but resilient to expected and unforeseen challenges, and sustainable for generations to come.

Another major crisis, as this monsoon has been a harsh reminder, is our natural disaster preparedness. Historically, Nepal has had a poor track record of preparedness and relief. But now the challenge has multiplied significantly and will continue to multiply more because what the global scientific community is sure of is the growing intensity of our natural disasters. A recent data has shown that disasters since June 2014 have cost Nepal over US \$40 million! And this is not counting the other tragic human and social cost of such disasters.

This is why as a Parliamentarian I have submitted a bill in the Parliament to explore the establishment of a National Authority for Disaster Preparedness and Management. This body would work at multiple levels to look into issues of simply evaluating risks, such as where might people be allowed to settle and what regions face what risk. This ties into some of the work that is already being done by development agencies in partnerships

with different government departments, but it is time to bring all of this work under one body whose only full-time job is to understand where risks are, and figure out how to mitigate those risks, and respond in times of emergency.

If we look at all these crises, there is one underlying cause and effect: our local and global ecology and how we interact with it – how we have in the past, how we do now, and how we will in the next crucial 15 to 25 years. So in the end, I want to express my firm belief that only a resilient ecology can ensure resilient communities for a resilient Nepal. We must pay attention to what we put into our soil, our air, our water. A resilient economy depends on a resilient ecology, too. Which is why we must seriously reconsider the way in which we have viewed development, and make sure we are on the path of a sustainable model, the only model that can ensure resilience. Without resilient ecologies, the work we do on nutrition will fail, the work we do on infrastructure will be meaningless, and public health crisis as well as agriculture crisis – deeply linked to each other – will become worse. These are defining years for Nepal, and the global community. And as an MP I am committed to working with my colleagues and other stakeholders to ensure the work on building a resilient Nepal never takes a back seat.

- **Gagan Thapa**

NEW VIDEOS

Using Satellites to Spot and Manage Forest Fire in Nepal (SERVIR Himalaya Program)



On June 5, World Environment Day, USAID released a short video on how a USAID partnership with NASA and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), through the SERVIR-Himalaya program, is utilizing satellite data to create innovative solutions to meet international development needs, including forest fire detection and monitoring in Nepal, which can be used by forest managers to improve their ability to respond to forest fires.

Stories of Being Me (USAID and UNDP's "Being LGBT in Asia" initiative)



On July 15, USAID hosted a public launch event at the U.S. Capitol in Washington DC for the Agency's new LGBT Vision for Action: Promoting and Supporting the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals. This Vision highlights the increasing inclusion of LGBT concerns in global development work and demonstrates the U.S. Government's commitment to the international human rights of LGBT persons.

This beautiful video, by the amazing Nilu Doma Sherpa, was showcased at the event.

The Last Yak Herder of Dhey (Hariyo Ban program)



Can climate change actually change everything, even a whole village?

In the upper Mustang region of Nepal, a traditional way of life is being threatened by climate change. Historically, the people of this region have been resilient, and adapted to the harsh dry environment, but today they are struggling to keep up. This video, released on June 5, World Environment Day, brings to you the life and times of a Himalayan community in one of the most climate vulnerable regions of the world, and an individual's struggle to cope with the changes.

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