

NEWSLETTER

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In Focus: Heifer Responds to Nepal Earthquake

On April 25, 2015, a massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck the nation killing over 8,600 and injuring over 22,000 people as of 30 May, 2015. In the days that followed, frequent aftershocks continued to traumatize citizens. Streets and open spaces were flocked with people living and sleeping under open sky. The earthquake brought down ancient architectures and heritage sites, tore apart paved roads, destroyed buildings, displaced families and took the lives of many innocent people. In aftermath of the disaster, electricity and cell phone networks were disrupted, causing a disconnection between families, friends and services. Heifer's preliminary assessment revealed that 17 out of its 41 project districts were significantly impacted by the disaster due to which 108 lives were lost, 378 injured and 25,138 houses completely destroyed. Immediately after the disaster, Heifer team came together to develop its response strategy.



Immediate Relief

Heifer International Nepal in coordination with the District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) of respective districts provided relief support to the earthquake victims in 13 districts. This initiative follows the government of Nepal's one door policy and is in alignment with Government appeal to all national and international NGOs to release their aid through DDRC to avoid resource duplication and ensure transparency in aid received and distributed.



Heifer mobilized its grassroots network - Self Help Groups, local youth groups and community stakeholders in rapidly assessing the damages and efficiently distributing relief materials for temporary shelter to 22,714 needy families in 97 VDCs and Municipalities of Baglung, Chitwan, Dhading, Kaski, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Lamjung, Nawalparasi, Nuwakot, Palpa, Parbat, Sindhuli and Tanahu districts. The organization has distributed 20,210 tarpaulins, 40,672 blankets, 220 mattress rolls and 32 rolls of plastic sheets with the total expenditure of NPR 52,873,239 (USD 524,531) as part of its immediate relief.

Public Service Announcement

The Ministry of Agricultural Development revealed deaths of around 17,000 large animals, 40,000 small animals, and 500,000 poultry as of 9 June, 2015. This number is expected to rise as some farming families, who have been forced to relocate are leaving their livestock behind due to uncertainty of their own future. Farmers who are keeping the animals are facing hardship on managing them properly under the crisis situation. Smallholder farmers are one of the most severely affected people with the loss of entire year's food stock, seeds and livestock. To avoid further losses of livestock assets and spread awareness on bio-security measures, Heifer disseminated PSA on national and community level radio networks broadcasted on highly impacted areas. A team of technical and communication specialists worked together to develop comprehensive PSA messages that could be easily understood by non-literate farmers. At a time when veterinary services have been disrupted increasing the vulnerability of livestock to infectious diseases and risk of zoonosis, the PSA is an effective means of educating farmers on the crucial steps that need to be taken immediately after disaster to avoid losses and prevent disease outbreaks. The PSA is targeted to reach farmers all over Nepal, including those not affected by earthquake in order to get them aware of proper livestock management in disaster situation.



Rebuilding Livelihoods

Heifer's preliminary assessment revealed that 17 of Heifer's 41 project districts had been significantly impacted by the earthquake. Heifer is working with over 50,000 families in these 17 districts alone under its Strengthening Smallholder Farmers in Livestock Value Chain (SLVC) project with the goal of reducing live goat and milk import by involving smallholders in value chain enterprises for increasing their family income and nutrition level. The disaster has destroyed project impact that had been achieved in the past 2 years of implementation. With the onset of monsoon, landslides and floods are expected to make the lives more difficult for the smallholder farmers. To recover from this loss and help families rebuild their lives, Heifer has been working in 6 Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Dhading and Nuwakot in first phase. Heifer is helping to address urgent needs of approx. 6,500 families in these areas through a community managed fund, improving WASH facilities, practices and behavior, and strengthening previous project structures.



From the Director's desk



Dear friends,

I present you with January – June 2015 edition of Heifer Newsletter featuring the updates and accomplishments of our work. The most catastrophic event in Nepal's history, Nepal Mega Earthquake 2015 has caused grave suffering and pushed back the country in terms of development. Through this report we share Heifer's response to the disaster, both immediate relief and longer term recovery. Here, I have also shared my thoughts on the role of livestock in recovering from a disaster and importance of including farmers in rehabilitation programs which was originally published in The Kathmandu Post.

In March, Heifer successfully organized Second National Workshop on "Sustainable Goat Enterprises for Food Security and Economic Growth in Nepal" together with The Department of Livestock Services, Nepal Agricultural Research Council and like-minded development partners. The workshop brought together multi-stakeholders on the same platform to initiate productive dialogues and generate ideas for better policy making. Event report from the workshop has been featured under our Highlight section.

This issue also provides updates on events and news along with program achievements from during this semi-annual period.

We hope this will be an insightful read to all our readers. To learn more about Heifer's work and get updates please visit our website and Facebook page.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shubh N. Mahato
Country Director

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Livestock for rehabilitation of livelihoods post disaster

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Livestock for rehabilitation of livelihoods post disaster

- The role of livestock in recovering from a disaster is significant in an agricultural country like Nepal. Therefore, farmers need to be a part of Nepal's recovery and rehabilitation strategy.



The role of livestock in recovering from a disaster is significant especially in a country like Nepal. According to the World Bank, prior to the earthquake, approximately 90 percent of the populations in districts outside of Kathmandu were engaged in agricultural activities, including livestock farming. These smallholder farmers are highly dependent on livestock for their income, assets and savings. In addition, livestock also provides them with food and nutrition, manure, draft power and access to informal credit. Livestock forms an important coping strategy for farmers as it can be sold for cash or even consumed in times of crisis. Preliminary estimates by the Ministry of Agricultural Development reveal deaths of around 17,000 large animals, 40,000 small ruminants, and 500,000 poultry as of 9 June, 2015. The economic impact of losing livestock during the earthquake has been deep and devastating to the owners. And there is a high

probability that this loss will continue to increase, as livestock subsector has not received the priority it deserves in programmatic planning of relief and recovery. For Nepal to recover from this disaster, we need to understand the value of livestock and challenges in rehabilitating them.

Solutions to the problems

Preliminary findings from agricultural needs assessment carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Nepal Food Security Cluster suggests that 50 percent of animal feed and 35 percent of livestock shelter were destroyed by the earthquake. Additionally, animals are also experiencing stress from the lack of nutrition, compounded by the lack of shelter in this hot and humid weather. Farmers will need to immediately start providing locally available roughage and agricultural by-products supplemented with mineral and vitamins

concentrates to maintain their health and sustain productivity, while locally available materials such as bamboos and timber should be used for reconstruction of livestock shelters by mobilizing local youths.

Also, the disruption of veterinary services has increased the vulnerability of livestock to infectious diseases, many of which might be zoonosis. This means that both the people and livestock are at high risk from disease outbreaks. Therefore, future losses to livestock assets must be avoided through appropriate preventive measures, mainly through vaccinations against epidemic, deworming and by adopting good hygiene practices and biosecurity measures.

Animal vaccination and deworming in Nepal are typically done before the onset of the rainy season. So strategic vaccination programs must begin immediately, preferably before the monsoon.

Monsoon will also bring the rice plantation season to full swing. But farmers will not

be able to make full utilization of the rain due to the loss of their draft oxen—traditionally used to plough fields. In addition, the death of breeding bulls that has occurred in the villages will deprive farmers from timely breeding services, thus adversely impacting milk production next year. The death of productive livestock assets will result in the overall reduction in productivity of crop-livestock integrated farms. Therefore, we need to ensure restocking of these essential farming assets for farm production system recovery while maintaining the production and productivity of the animals retained by farmers post-quake.

Failing our farmers

It is still not too late to bounce back and cut our losses, though. But any further delay can have a devastating impact on our country's economy. Heifer International Nepal's Goat Value Chain Study Report compiled goat import data available at the animal health quarantine offices, which revealed that around 475,000 live goats were imported from India in 2012/13. The data is even grimmer for dairy produce and other livestock. Before the disaster struck, significant works were being done in line with the government's Agriculture Development Strategy which resulted in decreasing annual import growth

rate. Post-disaster, we need to protect the work that was in progress and ensure that our achievement is not pushed back.

Failing to support our farmers can mean that our dependency on neighbouring countries for food will increase, along with increase in prices. Food security in the long run will be of grave concern, more so in the remote and mountainous areas along the seismic belt, which was severely affected by the earthquake.

For the 65 percent of the population that is actively involved in agriculture and livestock farming, sale of animals make up an important portion of their income. With their livelihood buried under the rubble, the next best option for many would be leaving the country in search of employment. For a country that already has a vast majority of its youth slaving abroad, and is currently struggling to rebuild itself, the additional loss of youth to foreign employment is a bad deal.

Under Heifer's SLVC project, support of \$ 1 million has been provided as revolving fund to the project beneficiaries in 6 VDCs of Dhading and Nuwakot districts to meet their urgent needs.



Rescue livelihoods

Simple interventions such as improved sheds built from locally available resources, balanced nutrition supplemented with mineral and vitamin blocks and access to veterinary services to prevent infection and treat injured livestock can help farmers avoid further losses. A study carried out by Heifer International Nepal, done between 2012 and 2014, demonstrates that simply by improving feeding practices and providing access to livestock-related health care, the productivity of milk in buffalo increased by 20 percent, while goat productivity increased by 26 percent within 24 months.

The best way to recover from this massive earthquake is to get back to our regular lives as quickly as possible. And for this we need to ensure that livelihoods are rebuilt so that people can work and earn their living, shelving aside the painful memories of loss and destruction. The Ministry of Agriculture Development and the Department of Livestock Services have been working on providing medicine and vaccines, tarps and feed for livestock in the 14 most-affected districts. But to recover from this scale of disaster, a lot more needs to be done. Donors and international agencies need to support the government's initiatives in rebuilding the sector. If multiple stakeholders supported each other in this initiative, it would be a great opportunity for Nepal to further develop its agriculture and livestock farming.



National Workshop on Sustainable Goat Enterprises for Food Security and Economic Growth in Nepal



Honorable Minister, Hari Prashad Parajuli, Ministry of Agricultural Development assured that Nepal would be self-sufficient in meat production within next 5 years.



Poster presentation session.



Bhagwati Parajuli, goat farmer and Heifer beneficiary sharing her concern with the policy makers.

The demand for goat meat is ever increasing in Nepalese market. Goat meat is served in every festival/occasion and is consumed by most communities in this culturally diverse country. Despite such a huge scope for goat production and marketing enterprises, Nepal imported approx. 475,000 live goats in FY 12/13 due to insufficient production and supply and the number is still likely to grow.

To address such numerous issues and promote goat sector, a national level workshop on “Sustainable Goat Enterprises for Food Security and Economic Growth in Nepal” was jointly organized by Heifer International Nepal together with Department of Livestock Services and Nepal Agricultural Research Council of the Government of Nepal on March 18 and 19, 2015 in Kathmandu, Nepal. 

Livestock scientists and experts presented on goat productivity and performance and different technologies/interventions that need to be adapted for efficient goat farming and marketing. Farmers and goat entrepreneurs shared the challenges they were facing regarding access to government services, credit and market - limiting their opportunity to scale up their farms.

The workshop provided a rare opportunity for multi-stakeholders from all levels such as farmers, goat entrepreneurs, goat experts, policy makers and development workers to come together to address opportunities and challenges and provide inputs on furthering goat sector for food security and economic growth.

Chief Guest of the event, Honorable Minister Hari Prashad Parajuli, Ministry of Agricultural Development expressed his gratitude towards the organizers for bringing together experts and helping the ministry through the recommendations. He ensured that there would be increased

Private-Public-Development agencies-Community partnership in the coming days.

John Stamm, Director of Social, Environment and Economic Development Office, USAID Nepal emphasized on how the workshop would help to influence policies and create partnership opportunities. He also shared some of the USAID initiatives to promote smallholder goat farmers in Nepal.

Heifer Nepal has aligned its 10 Year Program Plan with the Government's Agricultural Development Strategy by focusing on promotion of its priority commodities, one of which is goat, to assist the government with achieving its goal of becoming self-reliant in agricultural and livestock produce. Dr. Shubh N. Mahato, Heifer Nepal Country Director shared, “Heifer will continue its work with smallholder farmers in building their capacity on improving goat farming techniques for increased productivity and production levels and linking them to the market through farmer institutions for fair prices.” He also thanked the farmers present at the workshop for helping policy makers and development workers understand the situation and challenges faced by goat farmers across the country. He said, “Your input will help us develop policies and plans that addresses the real needs and obstacles of the farmers eventually boosting the goat subsector.”

Critical questions such as the inadequate supply of PPR vaccines were raised while recommendations such as establishing National Goat Breeders Association and extending inter-agency partnership through joint programs were made at the event. Goat farmers and entrepreneurs present at the workshop shared their concerns and practices at the community level such as the current

trend of registering new firms to exploit the support allocated to the sector by governmental and non-governmental agencies. They highlighted the need for a one door policy system for entire services such as production, feed, breed and subsidies.

Dr. Keshah Sah, Sr. Program Manager-Animal Well being shared the results of Heifer's work on “Genetic Improvement of Goats through Selection” project. The study showed that existing breeds had great genetic potential and if farmers are made aware on the economic benefits of selective breeding process then only can goat production and productivity increase and demand be met. Sharing on such work of proven success was highly appreciated and garnered enthusiasm for replication by line agency officials.

From Heifer, Oscar Castaneda Samayoa, VP for Americas program, Dr. Mahendra N. Lohani, VP for Asia and Europe program, Dilip Bhandari, Program Manager for Asia program along with staff from India, Mexico, Senegal and Zambia attended the event to learn about Nepal's work on Goat Value Chain.

This workshop was planned based on learning and achievements of the first national workshop on “Research and Development Strategies for Goat Enterprises in Nepal.” Important things happened as a result of the workshop. The Government of Nepal has adopted recommendations of the workshop in its policies and schemes while commercial banks and financial institutions are showing interest in commercial farmers. This year too, the participants forwarded recommendations collected from government, non-government and private sector to help develop relevant strategies and were also able to build network for future partnerships.

Farmers struggling to recover from Nepal Earthquake

When the massive earthquake struck on 25 April, Devi Rijal was feeding her chicken in her farm. Her two children – son studying in second grade and daughter in fourth grade were inside the house. Luckily both of them were able to run outside before the house completely collapsed behind them. Her son sustained injuries to the head and an arm from falling stones but is recovering after medical care.

Devi and her children have been living in a small temporary shelter made of corrugated tins for the past few weeks. She shared, “When the wind blows, it feels as if the whole structure will be torn apart. When it rains, water seeps inside, making everything damp and wet. Last night it rained and the water started entering inside. So this morning me and my neighbors together started digging a canal around our house to divert the rain water from entering inside.” Devi and her neighbors have been in Heifer’s Self Help Group for two years now. Heifer started its work in Tupache VDC in 2012 with the objective of organizing smallholder farmers into self-help groups to strengthen social capital and improve their livelihoods through agri-livestock based value chain enterprise development.

“The first night after the quake, we ate instant noodles as there was no food, no utensils, no cooking stove, nothing. Most men were off to neighboring towns or working abroad. So, it was just us women and children” recalled Devi after the earthquake razed her entire community to the ground.

Devi is grateful for having joined Heifer’s group two years ago as she finds support in them and they in her. “All of us in our community know each other well. After the disaster all of us stayed and worked together. It really was a great relief to have people around me.” Heifer organizes farming families into Self- help groups and together they receive trainings,



technical support for agriculture and livestock and are involved in group activities such as savings and credit, communal work and community development activities. The tight knit network they have developed in their community has been of great relief to the victims as they find moral support in each other and have been able to recover faster from the disaster than other non-organized communities.

“The first night after the quake, we ate instant noodles as there was no food, no utensils, no cooking stove, nothing.”

Devi has recovered from the shock and is busy mending her kitchen garden and taking care of her goats these days. She started raising goats only after she joined Heifer’s group. From Heifer she received 3 goats along with capacity building and income generation trainings. Just last year Devi earned NPR 80,000 (USD 800) by selling goats. Currently she has 7 goats left with her. Her family used to be entirely dependent upon her husband’s income as Nepal army

personnel but now she proudly shares that her income alone is sufficient to support the family while she has been able to save her husband’s earning. After the earthquake, her goats have lost their appetite and become frail. But she has been regularly consulting with Community Agro-Vet Entrepreneurs (CAVE) and technical coordinators who have been trained by Heifer to provide medical services to the farmers. Devi has built a temporary shelter for her goats and she provides them with fodder/forages that she had planted in her land. She is hopeful that with proper care and regular check up by the CAVEs her livestock will be healthy soon and she will be able to sell them at profit. “I might be able to save enough money to build a new house by the end of monsoon” shared Devi. But until then she and her children will be living in the tin house they call home.



News and Events

Pro-poor wealth creating value chain development training workshop conducted



From 23-25 April, 2015, Heifer Nepal conducted training on Pro-poor wealth creating value chain (PPWCVC) development for its program and training staff in Banke district. Heifer's PPWCVC model works towards empowering smallholder farmers who usually are the most exploited actors in the value chain due to lack of market information, unregulated market and no bargaining power. Heifer has been working to incorporate its Self Help Groups into Cooperatives through which farmers will be directly connected to the market. The major agendas of the workshop were:

- To make the participants familiar with the concept of pro-poor value chain.
- To develop skill in mapping the value chain and identify gaps.
- To develop deeper knowledge, skills, and tools to design and implement Pro-poor Wealth Creating Value Chain.
- To develop action plan and put their learning into practice.

Through this training, the program staff will help to reinforce social capital in the Value Chain approach to provide quality product at a fair price to the consumers and emphasize a fair share of profit to all the VC actors by placing smallholder farmers in the mainstream economy.

Mid-term evaluation for SLVC project in process



SLVC is Heifer Nepal's flagship project that has introduced and implemented multiple innovative tools and approaches. Therefore, a mid-term evaluation is being conducted to reflect and learn from its unique experience. The main purpose of the evaluation is to zoom into the sub-projects to assess progress, process, impacts, and innovations to provide a balanced assessment of the sub-projects' strengths, weaknesses, and side-effects. The mid-term evaluation will focus on how the systems, processes, and activities have collectively contributed to the overall achievements of the objectives, outputs, and outcomes. The evaluation will cover the period from March 2012 – until date and will include an assessment of diverse thematic areas such as technical components, program quality, implementation/design processes and cross cutting areas. The evaluation team comprises of both internal and external evaluators and experts in evaluation design, international development, social capital, animal management and gender dynamics for precise and impartial results. Complete findings from the evaluation are expected to be published by early FY 16.

Vice President for Institutional Business Development, Gregory Kearns and Manager for Partnership Business Development, Kamil Madanat visit Nepal program



The Vice President and Manager from Heifer Washington office visited Nepal in February as part of their introductory visit to Heifer International programs. Nepal team provided information on its current status, strengths and weaknesses, current donors and relationship with international donors. They also had a meeting with John Stamm, Director of Social, Environment and Economic Development Office, USAID Nepal to talk on possibilities of partnership between the two organizations. During their visit, Gregory and Kamil also visited Heifer project areas in Nepalgunj region where they interacted with Self Help Groups and learnt about their work and progress with Heifer's projects. Gregory shared that in his travel to over 30 countries he had never seen the strong solidarity that

was seen among members of Heifer's communities. He further added Heifer's work in Nepal had built a strong social capital as a foundation for promotion of other sectoral programs.

Final Evaluation of Heifer International Nepal Program completed by Social Welfare Council (SWC)



The SWC, an autonomous body responsible for the promotion, facilitation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the NGOs in Nepal, completed final evaluation of Heifer's program. The evaluation study was conducted to explore to what extent the program had contributed to achieve the goals set in project agreement.

An independent program evaluation team was commissioned by SWC to evaluate 5 years program implemented by the Heifer. The evaluation team comprised of a team leader, financial expert and representatives of concerned ministries. Detail field works were conducted in 6 districts namely Banke, Dang, Baglung, Kaski, Chitwan and Mahottari.

The evaluation findings showed that project families had significantly increased their income from goat and other agricultural enterprises. The project had made substantial achievements in mobilization of Community Agro-vet Entrepreneurs (CAVE) to enhance access of animal health services, and promote different fodder/forage. Significant numbers of goat sheds were constructed and knowledge and skills regarding the animal feed preparation had increased. Numerous cooperatives were engaged in providing enterprise development related services focusing on bulking and scheduling of goats, collecting agricultural and livestock related products.

Based on the successful evaluation results, the extension of general agreement (five years) between Heifer and SWC has been approved.

Program Achievements (July – Dec 2014)

21,325
Families
benefited

5,966
Livestock
placed

NPR. 63, 818, 627
out of a total of
NPR 24, 17,21,074
collected during this period in
group funds

56,347
People trained

4,520
Active Self-Help
Groups

8
New
Cooperatives
registered

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