

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

(Clockwise) Durmati Gurung and her neighbor show the chamber where the overflow of water is collected to use for vegetable cultivation. | Durmati proudly shows off tomatoes grown in her field. | Local women harvest tomatoes irrigated with the help of the overflow of water. | Newly constructed tap in Huslangkot of Dharampani in Tanahun District.



PHOTOS: AKASH SHRESTHA, WWF NEPAL

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A popular Nepali proverb states: “If you are thirsty, you must go to the river. The river does not come to you.” But for the members of Siddhathani Community Forest Users Group (CFUG) in Dharampani of Tanahun District, water now flows to them. The residents of Huslangkot, who used to walk about three hours each day for a pot of water, currently have water gushing from taps right next to their houses. USAID’s Hariyo Ban program helped to make this possible by supporting an innovative approach for the local community to adapt to drought and other adverse impacts of climate change.

In a detailed vulnerability assessment conducted by Hariyo Ban, Huslangkot was identified as one of the most vulnerable regions due to its water scarcity. During the assessment, locals shared how their troubles seemed to be escalating each year – the summers were hotter, leading to water sources drying up more quickly. Their biggest problem was that women and children from about 35 households had to travel downhill to the Kotle River to fetch water each day. Seventy-year-old Durmati Gurung,

whose house is at the top of the hill, remembers how she got up at four each morning to fetch water. She said, “I’ve lived here since my marriage, and this is a lovely place except for our constant difficulties with water. All of us got up at dawn and trudged downhill and then trekked back uphill with water in our dokos (baskets). But that was barely enough for drinking.”

Then her face breaks into a smile as she points to the communal tap just beside her door. “Now I can go out and fetch water anytime I want. It is like a miracle,” she says. This transformation was brought about through the Community Adaptation Plan of Action (CAPA) prepared with USAID’s Hariyo Ban support. The CAPA identified

a drinking water system as the top priority in Huslangkot. In order to address the water deficit and enhance the community’s adaptive capacity, the Rural Energy Fund developed the Kotle Khola Rural Solar Drinking Water Project, which pumps water from the Kotle Khola stream up to the village with a solar pump. Technical and financial support was provided by the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPCC), the Rural Energy Fund, and Hariyo Ban.

In a matter of months, the solar panel, intake reservoir tank and distribution tank were constructed. Seven taps have been constructed throughout the village, and the community continues to marvel at the accessibility of drinking water. “I have a family of five, and we have enough for drinking, washing and cooking. In fact, we even have water for irrigation, and I planted tomatoes, onions, gourds and cucumbers. Who would have believed we could plant vegetables in this barren land!” says Durmati Gurung.

Ram Bahadur Thapa, chairperson of the drinking water project, says, “Our children could not go to school on time as their mothers would return late with the water and had no time to cook. But thanks to the continuous water supply, there are no such hindrances anymore. Our entire community feels blessed.”

Along with the water supply, the community took part in several other climate change adaptation activities. In fact, the Siddhathani CFUG was awarded first prize by the Western Region Forest Directorate for its outstanding contribution to conservation and the development of mountain ecosystems and local livelihoods. The award was presented during the celebration of International Mountain Day in December 2013 in Pokhara.

Huslangkot is one example of Hariyo Ban’s work to improve community access to water. Water is at the heart of every community, and increasing climate variability - along with changes in land use - are affecting water supplies in many places. In order to promote climate resilience, it is important to ensure that vulnerability to drought and disease are reduced through a clean water supply. For a community whose chief vulnerabilities were identified as water shortage and drought, Huslangkot is well on its way toward climate change adaptation. ●

PROJECT BENEFICIARY

SORSWATI PARIYAR

Sorswati Pariyar, 29, has a young son and lives with her in-laws in Lachok, Kaski District. Her husband, like thousands of other Nepali men who have left the country for better economic opportunities, works overseas. However, he has not yet been able to send money back home. Sorswati, with only a high school degree, was unable to find a job locally to support the family.

Last year, USAID’s Initiative for Climate Change Adaptation (ICCA) project trained Sorswati to grow off-season tomatoes using a high tunnel drip irrigation system. She also used safe integrated pest management (IPM) that was developed in Nepal through USAID’s IPM Innovation Lab project with the National Research System.

Sorswati earned \$400 last year and has added an extra tunnel this year to increase her income. The high tunnel system allows farmers to start growing crops before the monsoon, provides protection during the monsoon, and allows them to harvest from the end of the monsoon through the winter months, when farmers are able to get higher prices for off-season vegetables. Sorswati sells her produce locally through a collection center formed by the ICCA project. The center also provides her with information for using the right inputs and growing the most profitable crops.



Sorswati uses this income for her son’s education. She wants her son to have a higher education so that he can have better opportunities in life than she has had.

USAID’s ICCA project works in eight districts to increase the incomes of 20,000 smallholder households through climate resilient agriculture. It also facilitates development of Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAs) covering over 100,000 smallholder households. LAPAs are investment plans to guide local government and development programs for climate change adaptation. ICCA works to integrate climate change adaptive technologies and approaches into the LAPA process, including micro-irrigation and multiple use water systems for efficient use of scarce water resources; safe bio products for plant protection; high tunnels to enable off-season production; resilient essential oil crops; and coffee growing on steeply-sloped marginal lands. ●

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