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 link!

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 Shatruja 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 Nepal 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 living with disabilities.

Please 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
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 Nepalese 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 climate change.

Ultimately, resilience is all about making sure that individuals, families, and communities are prepared to deal with severe shocks and stressors. It is about helping farmers use better seeds that resist droughts 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 life working in close partnership with the Nepalese people. Through the hard work of many people, we have achieved some important milestones. But there is more to do. And 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 partnership with the government and the private sector is so important. And this is why working in close partnership with the Nepal media is so important.

Continued ... on Page 12

Working Towards a Resilient Nepal

- 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 it is true that the needs of rural Nepal are different from those of the urban centers, the needs of the rural areas outside of Kathmandu are not the same. We need to address the needs of rural areas, and we need to do so in a way that is sustainable.

Continued ... on Page 12

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

PHOTO: USAID

PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

PHOTO: USAID
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 group” 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, broadcast 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 1,000 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 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 now manufactures 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.

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.

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

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.

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

1: More Inclusive And Effective Governance
Over the next five years, DO I 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

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 growth activities. For example, 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
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 the GON’s health management information system and national population surveys.

**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), 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.

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

**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

O n 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 reprise 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 across 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, Nepal 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 Nepal 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 local community. In return, unit volunteers get access 9 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 biodiversity forest in 2013. Asserting that three species were not vulnerable 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 112 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 individuals 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, 8,000 forest user groups manage 4.4 million acres of forest, and 40 percent of Nepal’s benefit from community forest management. Several groups earn substantial revenue from the sale of sustainably harvested medicinal plants, essential oils, and other non-timber

---

**PROFILE**

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

— 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)
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 bases 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:

**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 doubts 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 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.

**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 their 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 development, especially so for agriculture 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 line up 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.

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 their 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 development, especially so for agriculture 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 line up 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
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 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 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 scale. 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. 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.
INVESTING IN BUSINESS LITERACY TO EMPOWER VULNERABLE NEPALIS AND HELP END EXTREME POVERTY

Reaping the Benefits of Education
Let me tell you the story of Rina Chaudhury. 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.

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.

Business Literacy project will take 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.

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, $64 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.

It Doesn’t Have to Be This Way
At USAID, we’ve learned how much more effective trainings in skills such as entrepreneurship, literacy, numeracy, and basic health and nutrition can be when combined with training in agriculture. The combination helps breaks 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 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 Business Literacy project 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.
JUSTICE AFTER TWO DECADES

USAID Support Leads to Landmark Judgment on Organ Trafficking

Kathmandu District Court passed a landmark judgment on organ trafficking under the Human Trafficking and Transplantation (Control) Act, 2077 (2010). The 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 harvest human organs. One of the perpetrators was also charged for a second kidney trafficking case in Kavre District. The court convicted him in December 2013 in an orginal case and sentenced him in May 2014. This is the first such case to attract the full attention of the justice system in Nepal.

SNAPSHOT

Fifteen years after being sold for sex work in India, Birani (pseudonym) 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 2014, she finally walked out of 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 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 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 supports local district lawyers and two local NGOs – Forum for Protection for People’s Rights Nepal and Legal Aid and Consultancy Center – to help strengthen Birani’s legal case. They collected necessary testimonial and supported the district attorney in collecting the victim witness testimony and preparing and delivering the pleadings for her case. In May 2013, the District Court not only convicted the three traffic-fakers, sentencing them each to a 20-year prison term, but also fined them Nepali Rupees 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 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 adequate 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 still remain challenged to exercise their rights 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 Suahara 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 whenever 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 Suahara project, meaning “Good Nutrition” in Nepali, supports the Government of Nepal’s multi-sector nutrition plan. Since 2011, working in 25 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 Suahara 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 Suahara’s training. She learned about the importance of a diverse, nutritious diet and extra meals for expectant mothers, exclusive breastfeeding and 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. “Aun, 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 Suahara 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 Suahara, 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

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 Nepal 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, 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 growth for the health sector’s 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.
Nepal is ranked as one of the world’s most climate vulnerable countries. 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**

   **CLIMATE CHANGE**
   - Nepal ranked as one of the world’s most climate vulnerable countries.
   - Climate change is a serious and pressing issue.
   - Increasing effects of climate change are noted or implicated in various aspects of Nepali life.

   **IMPACT vs ACTION**
   - Impact of climate change:
     - Glaciers
     - Agriculture
     - Water
     - Health Hazard
     - Water Resources
   - Action to mitigate climate change:
     - Climate resilient cities and urban centers.

2. **Ankit Dhakal**

   **CLIMATE SMART**
   - Kathmandu Valley
   - Sustainable Energy:
     - Solar panels used for electricity generation.
     - The Bagmati River for irrigation and water supply.
   - Waste Management:
     - Recycling of waste materials.
   - Safe Water Supply:
     - Improved drinking water.
   - Reduced Carbon Emissions:
     - Improved livelihoods.

---

[INFOGRAPHICS]

*Top two winners of the climate change infographic contest.*
IN FOCUS: RESILIENCE

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

The issue of resilience goes well beyond figures and statistics. It’s about the people who have to live through it. It’s about the daily challenges they face, how they cope with them, and how they learn to adapt.

In the field of disaster preparedness, for example, we talk about “building resilience.” This means creating systems and structures that can absorb shocks and stresses, and bounce back stronger.

In agriculture, it means adopting new technologies and practices that can help farmers cope with changing climate conditions. In urban development, it means creating more livable communities that can adapt to rising sea levels and other environmental changes.

It’s about creating a culture of resilience, where people are not just able to respond to disasters, but are also able to anticipate them and prepare for them.

This is why the UN is calling for a “Resilience Revolution,” where we integrate resilience into all our development work. It’s not just about reacting to disasters, but about acting proactively to prevent them.

It’s about understanding that we live in a world of increasingly interconnected systems, and that we need to think about resilience at multiple levels.

Continued ‘Working Towards a Resilient Nepal’ from page 2

The United States Government and the people of the United States are proud to support the people of Nepal in their journey toward a Resilient Nepal.

The United States has a long history of partnership with Nepal, going back to the days when the American people supported survivors of the 1934 earthquake. Over the years, we have provided assistance to help Nepal build resilience against various shocks, including natural disasters, economic shocks, and health crises.

Today, we are proud to support Nepal in its efforts to build a prosperous, economically strong, and environmentally sustainable country. We believe that resilience is key to achieving this goal.

We support Nepal’s efforts to build resilience in agriculture through projects like the Hariyo Ban program, which is helping farmers adapt to climate change.

We also support Nepal’s efforts to build resilience in urban areas through projects like the Urbanization of Kathmandu program, which is helping to make the city more livable.

In both agriculture and urban areas, we are supporting partnerships between the government, local communities, and the private sector to build resilience.

We believe that by working together, we can build a more resilient Nepal.