After 35 years of working in development, I continue to find it fascinating — but not surprising - how much of a country’s overall socioeconomic development is revealed by the status of its women. The high correlation between gender equality and human development suggests that more socially inclusive societies are generally more stable and prosperous. It’s no coincidence that Nepal ranks 157th of 187 countries in the 2011 UNDP Human Development Index and 113th of 146 in the Gender Inequality Index—within the bottom quartile for each index.

One trend that is having a dramatic effect — both positive and negative—for Nepali women is the increase in out-migration of working-age Nepali men. The 2011 census found that approximately one in ten Nepali men is employed abroad, with that figure nearing one in six in some agricultural districts. This demographic shift has created new opportunities and challenges for the women left behind. As in many countries, Nepali women have always played an important and often unrecognized role in the agriculture that sustains nearly 80 percent of the population. With so many men abroad, however, women have stepped into more aggressive leadership roles than they have traditionally had. This calendar highlights some of these new roles and the successes and lessons we’ve started to learn as we support them to become more productive, more connected to markets, and ultimately better able to provide homes, education, nutrition, and other basic needs for their families.

Nepal is one of 20 focus countries for President Obama’s Feed the Future Initiative, an ambitious program designed to address the root causes of hunger and poverty. This initiative has recognized from the start that women’s contributions to agriculture are critical to achieving global food security. There is consistent and compelling evidence that when the status of women is improved, agricultural productivity increases, poverty is reduced, and nutrition improves. Women farmers often do not have the same access to land, water, seeds, training, and credit that men do. It is estimated that if women did have the same access to these resources, they could increase farm yields by 20-30 percent. This increase in agricultural output could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by up to 150 million people.

We've also learned how much more effective agricultural training can be when it’s com-bined with training in other life skills such as entrepreneurship, literacy, numeracy, and basic health and nutrition. We’ve seen that integrated training makes enormous contributions to women’s sense of empowerment. I’ve heard so many of our women participants talk proudly about how they now control the family finances, how they can now help their children with schoolwork, how they feel more confident discussing family decisions and weighing costs and benefits with their husbands. In fact, there are thousands of examples of women running production systems—in other words, their farms—as business enterprises as opposed to traditional subsistence farming.

As women’s productivity and incomes increase, the benefits amplify across families and generations. Numerous studies have shown that women tend to devote a larger fraction of their income to their children’s health and nutrition, laying the foundation for a lifetime of improved health and better educational outcomes.

For this calendar we chose the theme "Women in Agriculture" to showcase the changing scope and range of women’s roles in agriculture and the impact this has on families and communities. This calendar also provides a preview of our new flagship Feed the Future program, expected to begin early next year. This program will build on the successes and lessons learned from two highly successful programs—Education for Income Generation and Nepal Flood Recovery—which recently ended.

We at USAID are honored to support these strong, resilient women who have so eagerly embraced the opportunity to provide a better future for their families and who are committed to achieving their goals. As they become more productive and empowered to control resources and make decisions, Nepal becomes stronger. We look forward to continuing this journey together. On behalf of the entire USAID/Nepal family, I wish you a very happy 2013!

David C. Atteberry
Durga Gharti, a graduate of USAID’s Education for Income Generation (EIG) program, stands proudly with her husband, Balbir Gharti. He returned home from Saudi Arabia after seeing his wife’s increased earnings as a farmer, and she taught him how to grow high-value crops. Together, they have recently added 10 ropanis (1.25 acres) of land to their farm. “My earnings from last year’s harvest were over Rs 200,000,” Durga said, “This year also we expect a good turnover.”

At a time when the National Census 2011 reports that one in every four households has at least one family member absent or living abroad, husbands returning to work on their wives’ farms appears to be a growing trend in several villages across the mid-western region in Nepal where EIG operated for the last five years.
Through EIG’s agriculture training and links to improve seeds, markets, and other resources, EIG beneficiaries have seen their average annual incomes increase by $428, or 251%, costing USAID only $64 per beneficiary.

Tomatoes ripen on a vine.
In Dhakeri, Kohalpur, a women’s cooperative grows and harvests lemongrass and citronella from which, with the USAID Education for Income Generation (EIG) program’s help, they have learned to produce high-value essential oils. The program has trained marginalized youth, especially women, in cultivating non-timber forest products such as chamomile, mentha, lemongrass and citronella. The program established over 80 distillation units in four mid-western districts. As a result of market linkages supported by EIG, these non-timber forest products are now largely sold in the export market.

### WOMEN’S LIVELIHOODS THROUGH NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS

USAID’s projects support non-timber forest products, specifically essential oils, which have created new opportunities for farming families while boosting income. High-value essential oils have increasing export potential, and women farmers have found that their scent has the additional benefit of safely and naturally repelling wild elephants, which have been known to destroy crops and injure villagers.
Women transport lemongrass to the distillation unit where the high-value essential oil is extracted, then exported. In addition, the growing of lemongrass promotes forest regeneration because it keeps animals from grazing on young trees.

Photo: Kashish Das Shrestha

FOLLOW US ON:
facebook.com/usaidnepal
twitter.com/usaidnepal
youtube.com/usaidnepal
Ruby Chaudhary, of Lamahi, Dang, tends to her seedlings, which she sells to other farmers. She is one of more than 190 local agriculture service providers trained by USAID’s Education for Income Generation (EIG) program, which supported more than 50,000 farmers, providing valuable inputs such as seeds and seedlings.

FROM FARMERS, FOR FARMERS
USAID’s projects have not only helped women farmers improve their agricultural productivity; they have also allowed them to empower other female farmers. Some women farmers are now local agricultural service providers who share their newfound knowledge with other women farmers. Some of them can now charge a nominal fee for their advice, thus creating a sustainable way to spread knowledge of best agriculture and livestock practices.
Known as “Dr. Livestock,” EIG-trained Dhana Maya Bista prepares to castrate a goat. She is a local agricultural and livestock service provider to more than 500 households and sees 15 to 20 clients a day. Her services – traditionally performed by men – are in great demand. She now earns an average monthly net income of NRS 5,000. There are 30 livestock service providers like Dhana Maya Bista in the Mid-western region who have been trained by EIG and are serving more than 7,000 farmers.

**FOLLOW US ON:**
- facebook.com/usaidnepal
- twitter.com/usaidnepal
- youtube.com/usaidnepal
Hundreds of women gather to sell their products on trading day at the Kapurkot Agricultural Produce Market Center in Salyan district. USAID/Nepal’s Education for Income Generation (EIG) program helped establish and support a total of 81 vegetable collection centers that currently serve more than 63,307 farmers—a number that will continue to grow. Twice a week, the Kapurkot market center, established in the 1990s with USAID support, becomes a trading hub where predominantly female farmers sell truckloads of fresh local vegetables.

WOMEN ACCESSING MARKETS
EIG’s activities focus on women between the ages of 16 and 38. In fact, 80% of EIG’s beneficiaries are women. USAID helps women access markets so they can sell their products, enter new markets, and diversify their income. The project has connected rural communities living in remote areas to previously inaccessible markets through the establishment of collection centers, where smallholder farmers’ products are aggregated for sale to traders.
A young girl waits to sell tomatoes grown by her family after receiving USAID's agriculture training.
Women trained by USAID’s Education for Income Generation (EIG) program share new skills with their husbands and work together to increase family income. EIG trained more than 54,000 disadvantaged youth, primarily women, benefiting more than 270,000 additional family members.

GREATER GENDER EQUALITY AND RAISED FAMILY INCOMES

Empowering female farmers is an important part of President Obama’s Feed the Future Initiative and a key approach for USAID in Nepal. USAID’s training has empowered women to control household finances and even become the primary household income generator. Gender equality activities target both women and men and include gender sensitivity and conflict resolution trainings to help households and communities embrace new, equitable gender roles.
USAID’s Nepal Flood Recovery Program worked with thousands of women over the last four years, empowering them to grow high-value vegetables, access lucrative and steady markets, and improve the nutrition and health of their families.
Rina Chaudhary, a former Kamalari (bonded laborer), clutches her USAID literature textbook outside the classroom. She is a graduate of the Education for Income Generation (EIG) program’s Business Literacy and Agriculture Productivity Training. Once entirely dependent on her husband’s income, she now earns enough to support the family and her husband’s income can be designated as savings. Rina also takes great pride in finally being able to help her 2nd grade daughter with homework, and is determined to expand her agriculture enterprise.

EMPOWERING FORMER BONDED LABORERS

USAID supports the most vulnerable groups by seeking out and including women, youth, former bonded laborers, and religious and ethnic minorities in its activities. Training for these groups includes literacy, numeracy, nutrition, maternal and child health, vocational training, and entrepreneurship and business skills.
Eggplants await harvest on a farm run by women farmers, former Kamalaris and EIG beneficiaries.
Maya Chaudhary with her son, Abinash, in Kailali district receives counseling from community trainer Raj Rani Rana. Participants in USAID’s Nepal Flood Recovery Program received nutrition and hygiene training focused on nutritious food production and eating habits through home gardening. The program trained nearly 6,000 farmers and established 4,500 home gardens producing nutritious food for home consumption. The program also installed more than 1,700 improved cooking stoves and more than 1,000 latrines.

ENSURING BETTER NUTRITION AND HYGIENE

USAID directly supports the national Vitamin A supplementation program in Nepal, which averts the death of approximately 15,000 children each year. Additionally, our nutrition and hygiene activities improve household dietary practices to ensure that families – particularly women and children – eat a diverse set of nutritious foods in a hygienic environment. USAID’s programs have improved the affordability, accessibility and availability of nutritious food to rural households by integrating the complementary impacts of commercial agriculture, nutrition and hygiene, and productive infrastructure.
USAID-supported community trainers regularly monitor child height and weight. Nutritional impact is measured both in terms of changes in food consumption and by indicators such as body mass index, prevalence of breastfeeding, and diet diversity.

**Independence Day**

**Guru Purnima**
A mother carries her child in her arms and holds her Education for Income Generation literacy textbook. Many mothers have found new confidence and pride in being able to finally help their children with their school work.

Increased incomes for families have led to higher school enrollment in regions where USAID programs work. It is also evident that with growing income, farmers have invested in buying or leasing additional farmland and making livestock acquisitions while repaying loans and starting savings. With a stronger economical standing, there is also a trend of decreased seasonal migration for employment, and overall improved nutrition and health of entire families.

EMPOWERED MOTHERS MEAN HEALTHIER, EDUCATED CHILDREN
Through their literacy classes, mothers and young women are able to better understand the importance of nutrition for their families. And through their raised incomes as farmers, they are able to invest in both their children’s education and nutritious meals for the family.
Sapana Bhattarai converted her field from cereal production to high-value vegetables after the USAID-Nepal Flood Recovery Project (NFRP) provided her with an irrigation scheme, improved technologies and technical training required for commercial-level production.

NFRP began as a relief program for victims of flooding, but through agriculture training on high-value crops, The program transformed into a full-fledged development project with powerful results. In the last four years, NFRP enabled more than 12,000 farming families to increase their net sales by 800 percent, more than tripling household income.
Muliya Rana is a tomato producer from Kailali district. After receiving technical assistance from NSRP, she earned more than $7,000 within just one crop cycle, equating to nearly $12,000 in annual farm sales. Today, she is one of the program’s most successful farmers.

---

**FOLLOW US ON:**
- facebook.com/usaidnepal
- twitter.com/usaidnepal
- youtube.com/usaidnepal
A family of women readies their field and plants saplings using traditional tools, a fairly common practice.

Investing in women and empowering them with new techniques yields better incomes and improved quality of life for their families. In Nepal, the out-migration of males from villages across the country in recent years has fueled a “feminization of agriculture.” Considering the significant role of agriculture in Nepal’s economy, addressing this phenomenon will be key to sustaining and growing the sector. With USAID’s training and subsequent increased incomes of women farmers, they have been able to buy modern equipment such as sprinklers and portable nutrient sprays.

RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY NECESSARY TO ADDRESS WOMEN’S NEEDS

Photo: Fintrac Inc.
A USAID beneficiary in Salyan district, whose primary source of income is her farm, has invested in new farm tools such as this sprinkler.
Heera Kumari Bhatta, daughter of USAID’s Nepal Flood Recovery Project farmer Parbati Devi, picks tomatoes from a plastic greenhouse in Assigram, Dadeldhura. Plastic greenhouses are used to grow high-value vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumber, and lettuce during the off season. The 5x10 meter greenhouse with a drip irrigation system produces about 600 kilograms of high-quality tomatoes per crop cycle, worth about $250. Heera is a nursing student and helps on the family farm when she is home.

FEEDING THE FUTURE
USAID is investing over $60 million in its new Feed the Future program in Nepal to reduce poverty and hunger while increasing agricultural productivity and incomes through a variety of integrated food security, agricultural and nutrition activities targeting poor farming families. Women and children under five years of age, with a particular emphasis on children under two, are the focus of many of these activities.
Parvati Devi and her daughter, Heera, grading their tomato harvest.
Throughout the life of the program, USAID’s Nepal Flood Recovery Program impacted nearly one million Nepalis. To strengthen community planning and development through the increased participation of youth, women, and marginalized populations in local decision making, the program trained 3,000 youth and adults in leadership, community development, and disaster management.

FEEDING THE FUTURE
Looking forward, USAID hopes to reach up to one million Nepali farming families through its Feed the Future program. In collaboration with various U.S. agencies and the Government of Nepal, USAID hopes to ensure a better future for Nepali families.
A woman sells her healthy harvest of gourds and squash at a local market.

Photo: Fintrac Inc.

Christmas Day

FOLLOW US ON:
facebook.com/usaidnepal
twitter.com/usaidnepal
youtube.com/usaidnepal
USAID’s Nepal Flood Recovery Program, implemented by Fintrac, supported community infrastructure projects that directly benefit agricultural production. In the Hill region, understanding the geographic constraints, the program helped install hybrid irrigation systems that are cost-effective, easy to maintain, and environmentally friendly. Access to a steady water supply dramatically improves farmers’ productivity.
LINKING WOMEN DIRECTLY TO MARKETS

Women wait to sell their vegetables to traders. USAID efforts like the Education for Income Generation program linked producers to market to ensure income generation. Around 82% of the beneficiaries were women.
Farmers proudly hold in their palms freshly picked beans, chilli, eggplant and tomatoes from their farms.

Photos: Fintrac Inc.