



in focus

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE



Photo: Fintrac Inc

Of Agriculture, Women, and Development

David C. Atteberry, Mission Director, USAID/Nepal

After 35 years of working in development, I continue to be fascinated - but not surprised - by 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 is 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 10 Nepalis is employed abroad, with that figure nearing one in five 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 issue highlights some of these new roles and the successes and lessons we have 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.

Given this untapped potential, Feed the Future developed the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index to better track return on investments in women and agriculture. The index measures change for women in five areas: their role in household decision-making around agricultural production; access to productive capital; income; leadership roles within the community; and labor time allocations.

As we seek to influence these five domains of women's empowerment in agriculture, we have learned some important lessons and seen incredible successes in some of our recent programs. We've seen, for example, that when given access to new techniques and productive resources, women adopt them effectively. For instance, women have started using drip irrigation technology, hybrid seeds, and integrated pest management methods to raise productivity. They've taken advantage of agricultural and veterinary service providers who, with USAID support, are now embedded in their own villages. Combining this with newfound access to collection centers and larger markets, 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.

We have also learned how much more effective agricultural training can be when it is combined with training in other life skills such as entrepreneurship, literacy, numeracy, and basic health and nutrition. We have seen these types of integrated training make enormous contributions



Photo: Fintrac Inc

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.

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!



Photo: Kashish Das Shrestha

SNAPSHOT: USAID's Efforts to Empower Women through Agriculture

Creating Livelihood Opportunities

USAID projects supporting production of non-timber forest products, specifically essential oils, have created new income-generating opportunities for farming families. USAID's Education for Income Generation (EIG) program has trained marginalized youth, especially women, in cultivating non-timber forest products, such as chamomile, mentha, lemongrass and citronella. In Dhakeri, Kohalpur (left pic) a women's cooperative grows and harvests lemongrass and citronella from which, with EIG's help, they have learned to produce high-value essential oils. 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.



High Returns on High-Value Crops

USAID's Nepal Flood Recovery Program (NFRP) began as a relief program for victims of flooding, but through agriculture training on high-value crops, NFRP transformed into a full-fledged development project with powerful results. The program enabled more than 12,000 farming families to increase their net sales by an average of 800 percent, more than tripling household incomes. Muliya Rana (pic) is a tomato producer from Kailali district. After receiving technical assistance from the project, 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.



Gender Bender: Women Doing Men's Jobs

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 (pic) prepares to castrate a goat. A successful agrovet, she is a local agricultural 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.



Photo: Kashish Das Shrestha

LINKING WOMEN DIRECTLY TO THE MARKETS

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. USAID's Education for Income Generation (EIG) program linked producers to market to ensure income generation. Eighty-two percent of the beneficiaries were women.



GREATER GENDER EQUALITY

Gender integration is an important part of President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative and a key approach for USAID in Nepal. USAID's gender equality activities have empowered women to control household finances and even become the primary income generator. Gender equality activities target both women and men and include gender sensitivity training and conflict resolution trainings to ensure households and communities embrace new, equitable gender roles. Rina Chaudhary (pic) 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 for the couple to designate half of their income to savings. Rina is determined to expand her agriculture enterprise.



KEEPING FAMILY MEMBERS TOGETHER

At a time when the National Census 2011 reports that one in every four households have 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 Education for Income Generation (EIG) program operated for the last five years. Durga Gharti (pic), a graduate of EIG program, taught her husband Balbir Gharti to grow high-value crops. He returned home from Saudi Arabia after seeing his wife's increased earnings as a farmer. Together, they have recently added 10 ropanis (1.25 acres) of land to their farm. With increased incomes and yields, the family is able to stay together and farm their own land. (Also Read: **"Stemming the tide of labor migration in Nepal"**, an op-ed published in *Republica*, to learn more on how EIG program has transformed thousands of Nepali lives.)

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Agriculture, Women, and Development is a great topic to end 2012 and our first year of publication!

We hope that 2013 will bring even greater opportunities for the women and people of Nepal.



Sheila Lutjens,
Deputy Mission Director, USAID/Nepal



ENSURING ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

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. USAID programs have improved the affordability, accessibility and availability of nutritious food to rural households by integrating the complementary impacts of commercial agriculture, nutrition, hygiene, and productive infrastructure. Many mothers have found new confidence and pride in being able to finally help their children with their school work.



Goat Production - A Profitable Enterprise for Poor Women in Nepal

Sita Sunar of Chisapani in Banke district had always followed traditional practices of rearing two to three goats for personal use. She had never thought of raising goats commercially until she took part in the goat rearing training provided by USAID's Education for Income Generation program (EIG).

The training taught Sita simple yet effective techniques of goat rearing such as goat shed construction, herd management, primary breeding times, market demand and supply, and disease management. Sita also enrolled in EIG's business literacy class to further improve her business. She learned to read, write, keep records, and perform cost-benefit calculations using a calculator. After the training, Sita increased her herd size to 12 goats, sold eight of them, and earned NRs. 52,500 within a year.

As goats can be raised with little personal land, they represent an opportunity for smallholders who lack irrigation and marginalized landless Nepalis, particularly women. EIG provided training to goat producers like Sita Sunar in places where there were adequate communal lands with sufficient forage, and then facilitated partnerships among farmer groups, banks, private sector extension agents, and Nepal's District Livestock Service Office (DLSO) to

As goats can be raised with little personal land, they represent an opportunity for smallholders who lack irrigation and marginalized landless Nepalis, particularly women.



provide market-based livestock services that were previously unavailable in remote regions. The 7,644 extremely disadvantaged young people trained by EIG have increased their average annual income by more than 130 percent, with their incomes likely to grow as their herd size increases.

Sita happily states, "It never occurred to me that goat rearing could be a good business to generate income. The training and my initial success have given me enough confidence to increase the number of goats by applying the knowledge I gained through the training."

NEWS IN BRIEF - DECEMBER 2012

USAID Joins the Government of Nepal and Other Donors in Support of the Nepal Peace Trust Fund:

On December 10, U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Bodde signed a memorandum with the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction acknowledging USAID's contribution of \$1.5 million to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF). This partnership will allow the U.S. Government to better harmonize peace support efforts with the Nepal Government and other donors. USAID's funding will support conflict-affected communities, transitional justice, future elections, public infrastructure reconstruction, and other peace commitments. USAID will also hire a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Advisor who will strengthen the ongoing work within the Ministry and Peace Fund Secretariat gender units and address gender and inclusion within NPTF programs. USAID's support to the Fund also represents its commitment to donor coordination and harmonization of assistance for aid effectiveness. Nepal is the first and only country to lead a joint donor-host government trust fund. Since its inception in 2007, the NPTF has funded

Government of Nepal institutions to implement Comprehensive Peace Accord programs such as support to conflict-affected people, elections, cantonment management, and infrastructure reconstruction.

USAID's New Flagship Health Program in Nepal - Health 4 Life Awarded:

USAID announced the launch of a new program entitled Health 4 Life (H4L), whose primary goal is to strengthen Government of Nepal (GON) capacity to plan, manage and deliver quality, equitable family planning and maternal, newborn, and child health services. The program, in alignment with the U.S. Government Global Health Initiative strategy for Nepal, will focus on building a self-sustaining, inclusive healthcare delivery system to provide high-quality services that meet the divergent needs of Nepali citizens. Over the last two decades, Nepal has experienced steady improvement in health and has emerged as one of the few countries on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals related to reducing maternal and child mortality. However, challenges remain, including significant disparities between urban and rural populations' access to health care. For example, infant mortality in rural areas is 55 deaths per 1,000 live births compared with 38 deaths per 1,000 live births in urban areas.

This five-year, \$18.2 million program will be implemented by RTI International, a U.S. contractor, in partnership with local Nepali NGOs.

Washington-Led Cereal Systems Initiative For South Asia in Nepal (CSISA-NP) Commences:

CSISA-NP is a three-year initiative funded by USAID seeking to improve cereal productivity of three staple crops (rice, lentils, and maize) in 16 mid-hill and Terai districts in the Far Western and Mid Western Development Regions, as cornerstones for improving food security in Nepal. The second phase of CSISA project began in August with the mandate to establish pre-conditions for achieving durable agriculture development, and play a supporting role for the Feed the Future (FtF) initiatives in Nepal. In addition to strengthening the seed sector for rice, lentils, and maize in the FtF focus districts, CSISA-NP will also increase the availability of locally adapted crop and resource management technologies as well as the capacity for partners to bring these innovations to farmers.

The program has set up initial on-farm field trials with farmers to compare improved and local lentil varieties as well as different agriculture management practices. It is also looking for low-cost technologies that are not widely used at present but are known to improve productivity of the farmers. One such example is a small mechanical maize sheller, which removes corn kernels from the cob.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

