



SUCCESS STORY

Building a better future for Nepali women

Protecting women and children is a critical component of the USAID/Nepal Flood Recovery Program (USAID-NFRP). The program works in Nepal's Terai region, implementing outreach and awareness campaigns to build community capacity and coordinate interventions. The effort focuses on three areas: leadership training, community infrastructure and household improvement. During the last quarter of 2009, USAID-NFRP made significant strides in all three of these areas.

Leadership Training and Community Infrastructure

USAID-NFRP is empowering Nepali women and youths to make decisions. Girls have low levels of school enrollment and are more likely than boys to drop out, so USAID-NFRP is taking a multi-faceted approach to address the issue of women's education.

Educating men on gender issues is the first step towards empowering women. In the last quarter of 2009 USAID-NFRP conducted REFLECT sessions for 1,403 women and 325 men to increase literacy and promote gender awareness. The program also constructed schools closer to towns in the Central and Western regions, so that girls don't have to travel as far from home in order to attend.

During the same time period, NFRP's Better Life Option Program (BLOP) conducted youth empowerment sessions for girls at 60 youth centers. More than 3,000 young women received training in communications skills, leadership and decision-making. As a result, women's involvement in community activities has increased.

"Because of my lack of awareness and cultural pressures, I had stopped my education – but USAID-NFRP has encouraged me to rejoin school again," said Manju Tharu, a recipient of BLOP training.

Household Improvements

The sanitation, hygiene and nutrition program (SHN) implemented by USAID-NFRP is helping women improve the health of their families. During the last quarter of 2009, USAID-NFRP helped more than 1,400 households establish kitchen gardens, providing trainings and access to quality planting materials. The gardens provide a steady flow of nutritious food while lowering costs and decreasing time spent at the market.

The program also installed 102 improved cooking stoves (ICS) and conducted repair and maintenance sessions for 1,229 users at 60 worksites. ICS installed in homes reduce cooking time, produce less smoke and use less fuel. This means a decrease in household costs and in the time women spend preparing meals. Less smoke also means a home clean of carbon dust and fewer harmful respiratory affects on women. USAID-NFRP recently installed an ICS in the home of Sita Chaudhary, whose traditional stove left her house black from soot and caused health problems within her family. She is saving time and money with her ICS, and is able to keep her house clean and her family healthier.

USAID-NFRP works with flood-affected communities throughout the Terai region to increase farmer productivity and income, rehabilitate and develop small-scale community infrastructure, improve awareness of sanitation, nutrition, gender and protection issues, and strengthen local organizations by expanding participation among youths and vulnerable populations. The program is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



Manju Tharu returned to school after attending a USAID-NFRP Better Life Option (BLOP) training session



USAID-NFRP client Sita Chaudhary uses her improved cooking stove

Photos by Fintrac Inc

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— Manju Tharu