



Monthly Update: August-September 2008

USAID/Nepal Flood Recovery Program (USAID-NFRP) “Building Back Better”

NOTE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

The official project launch of USAID-NFRP was held on Sept. 24 and during the event, senior Nepalese government and USAID/Nepal officials visited the flood affected communities of the Barainiya Village Development Committee (VDC) in Bara district, and discussed with community members the impact of last year’s floods, their short and long-term development aspirations, and expectations they have for USAID-NFRP in their communities. Many villagers described positive initial impressions of USAID-NFRP based on quick mobilization and responsiveness to infrastructure priorities. It was my great pleasure to simultaneously inaugurate the new riverbank protection barrier that had been designed by our project engineer, supervised by a local construction partner, and built by many of the villagers. Other major deliverables during these two months included completion of participatory rural appraisals in 60 VDCs of the Terai targeted for project assistance that we are now using to inform critical income-generation and other recovery activities.

*Joe Sanders, Chief of Party,
USAID/Nepal Flood Recovery Program*

INFRASTRUCTURE

USAID-NFRP’s first infrastructure activity, 475 meters of river protection barriers and embankment repairs for Kantipur village of Barainiya VDC in Nepal’s Terai Region, was initiated in early September and completed within 25 days. As a result, 275 vulnerable households now have permanent flood protection. The construction, built at a cost of \$16,500 (20 percent less than Government of Nepal approved rates), generated more than 1,200 person-days of temporary employment in the community. Construction materials (bamboo and sandbags for gabions) were bought locally too, which contributed to the village economy at a time when household food supplies were low and market prices high. This activity was identified and prioritized by the USAID-NFRP worksite communities within Barainiya VDC, and is a model for other villages interested in similar infrastructure.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

USAID-NFRP’s chief of party visits a protection embankment with the site engineer.



USAID-NFRP engineer Mohan Shrestha (right) and the south consult site engineer discuss construction with villagers.

USAID/Nepal Flood Recovery Program

This project is implemented by Fintrac Inc., a US agribusiness firm, in partnership with METCON Consultants. USAID-NFRP collaborates with village development committees and local NGOs in the Terai to increase incomes from agriculture, support small-scale infrastructure and health/nutrition activities and strengthen organizational capacity, especially among vulnerable populations.

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Villagers work to build a river embankment in Barainiya VDC, Bara district.

AGRICULTURE

To date, the USAID-NFRP Senior Agronomist-Livelihoods Specialist has met with input suppliers (agro-vets) and farmer groups to identify high value crop production potential and domestic market demand. Together, they have agreed in the next quarter to initiate demonstration plots (not to exceed 0.4 hectares) on 480 hectares of land across 1,200 farms in the targeted six project districts, all of which will be considered for small-scale irrigation development. Potential crops include cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, chillies, eggplant, French bean, string bean, bitter gourd, cucumber, squash, watermelon, and non-timber forest products, such as mentha and lemon-grass. Seven national and regional NGOs were additionally pre-selected for bidding on provision of the agronomic extension activities that will begin in early October.

SANITATION, HYGIENE & NUTRITION

In addition to the needs and activities prioritized by VDCs during the participatory rural appraisals phase, a potential partnership linkage was initiated with a US medical supply



Community volunteers trained by USAID-NFRP assist villagers to assess needs and set priorities for recovery activities.

company to donate medical equipment and supplies to USAID-NFRP communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

USAID-NFRP subcontracted with nine local NGOs from the six program districts to conduct participatory rural appraisals (PRAs) via direct consultation with 60 VDCs, inclusive of community leaders and members, vulnerable and marginalized groups, women, youth and other stakeholders. The appraisals verified the extent of flood damage, and identified specific flood recovery activities in critical project areas (agriculture, infrastructure, health). The PRA process itself additionally strengthened the capabilities of the VDCs to visualize long-term development goals, and began to enhance their capacity to participate in program implementation of the flood recovery activities they prioritized (many of which were related to small-scale infrastructure such as the riverbank protection barriers). As part of the appraisal process, USAID-NFRP trained 45 local NGO staff and 300 community volunteers in the PRA methodology. These community volunteers have now been empowered as “program liaisons” through this exercise and will coordinate community efforts with future USAID-NFRP interventions.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

An important outcome of the PRA activity was the engagement and increased role of women as key stakeholders in the community development process. Special attention was given to risks and needs of women subjected to violence and children vulnerable to trafficking. Awareness education and capacity-building activities for this component are currently being designed, and will be implemented in the next quarter.

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