

Nepal: Bolstering Safety Nets



Improving Access to Nutritious Food, and Creating Opportunities for Farmers in Nepal

Overview

A World Bank project in Nepal has sought to increase food security and enhance agricultural production with the result that 91 percent of the target households in the project districts have reported an increased ability to meet their food needs, and 100 percent of the subsidized fertilizer has reached smallholder farmers. Under the public works component of the project, households have received an annual employment of about 58 days, close to the project target of 60 days.

Challenge

As in many parts of the world, food prices soared in Nepal in 2007-2008. With agriculture production remaining virtually constant, the increase in food prices severely affected many households across the country – in particular the households in the food insecure districts. The lack of any social safety nets or other means to cope with such a crisis left many households without food for several months. It was in this context that the Social Safety Net project was launched, with the prime objective of providing food relief to the food insecure households in the short term, and contributing to agriculture productivity and food security in the long run.

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Approach

Through its Food/Cash for Work program, the project has been able to provide immediate food security to the food insecure households of the target districts. Public works schemes implemented under the project are of three types: Food for Assets, in which beneficiaries are compensated for their participation with food; Cash for Assets, where beneficiaries are compensated with the equivalent of the wage rates of standard food for assets activities, and Cash and Food for Assets, in which part of the wage compensation is distributed in food and part in cash. Public works – supported by safety net funds, Government of Nepal and other donors –are carried out in a partnership

More Results



1
million

beneficiaries of the project

arrangement between the Ministry of Local Development and the World Food Programme. These public works are focused on improving agriculture-related infrastructure and activities, access to markets, and on decreasing vulnerability to floods.

By supporting the National Agriculture Research Council in the production of quality seeds and by providing fertilizer subsidy in the remote districts, the project has also emphasized the importance of increasing productivity to address longer-term food security. Finally, the project also supported a pilot community challenge fund on nutrition, aimed at helping communities identify the actions needed to improve the nutritional status of women and children. This pilot uses the strengths of the Poverty Alleviation Fund in reaching marginalized communities and the local government bodies responsible for delivering social protection programs to the poor and vulnerable.

Results

Over two years, the program helped support more than one million people across the country, with approximately 756,000 located in the mid and far-west districts during 2008-2009, and it employed 168,263 workers. This support improves food sufficiency levels for an additional two to two-and-a-half months for the most vulnerable households. Koshi post flood recovery projects in Saptari and Sunsari were carried out between 2008-9 and supported over 7,500 families through the recovery and rehabilitation projects of flood-damaged infrastructure. Livelihood activities were promoted through various vocational trainings and project schemes including the creation of irrigation and drinking water schemes, and the construction or rehabilitation of community buildings, wooden bridges and rural roads, among others. The program also supported the provision of Multiple Micronutrient Powder, containing essential vitamins and minerals, for children aged 6-59 months, across 33 districts. Additional results included:

1. Assets created for agricultural production directly benefitted 180,758 households in fiscal years 2008/09, 226,028 households in FY09/10, and 142,434 households in FY10/11.
2. The distribution of seeds and fertilizer benefitted 7,775 households in FY 08/09, 21,525 households in FY 09/10 and 43,300 households in FY 10/11.
3. A total of 851 kms of roads were constructed and rehabilitated, including 675 kms under the original Social Safety Net Project (2008-09) and 176 kms through additional financing in 2010-11.
4. A large number of agriculture production activities and technology transfer have been completed: irrigation for a total of 8,088 ha. of land was made possible due to the construction of irrigation schemes; 16,083 compost pits have been constructed; 2,272 ha. of land have been covered with plantations; and 247 ha. of land have been improved for agriculture purposes.
5. A total of 405 drinking water schemes were finalized through the project.
6. Production of 692 Metric Tons (MT) of breeder seeds has been completed and the capacity of the Nepal Agriculture Research Council to produce breeder seeds has increased dramatically. In the food insecure far-western region, this increase in capacity has resulted in an increase of wheat seed production within a single year.
7. 390 MTNs of seeds and 7,410 MTNs of fertilizer were transported to 23 remote districts.
8. Micronutrient Powder sachets for children aged 6-59 months were distributed to 12,000 children under the original Social Safety Net Project and to 122,000 children with additional financing.
9. Around 58 percent of the total direct beneficiaries are women.

Voices

“My group has a five fold increase in seed production and I'd like to expand my farmer's group.”

—*Shyam Prakash Yadav, Farmer*

851km

of roads were constructed and rehabilitated

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Bank Contribution

This project is supported under the Nepal Food Crisis Response Program with a credit/grant of US\$21.7 million for the Social Safety Net Project. Additional financing of US\$47.8 million for the project was approved by the Board in 2010. Project implementation started from September 2008 and the expanded project will end by September 30, 2013. In addition, funds from the Rapid Social Response trust fund were used to finance technical assistance to support the analysis of cash transfer systems.

Partners

The project has been able to forge strong partnership between Ministry of Local Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, and the World Food Programme. The Ministry of Local Development is also working with the Poverty Alleviation Fund (a semi-autonomous agency of the Government) to address nutritional challenges amongst young children and pregnant women. Various other aid agencies such as the U.K.'s Department for International Development, the U.S. Agency for International Development, SDC, Helvetas have reviewed the project design to determine their own program contributions. Joint donor and government assessments of food insecurity were used to inform the areas of focus of project.

Toward the Future

It is expected that the agriculture assets created, and the irrigation schemes constructed and rehabilitated through this project, will contribute to longer-term food security in the vulnerable districts. The technology transfer that is taking place, be it through construction of irrigation schemes or the construction of compost pits, will likely motivate farmers to adopt sustainable, practical and indigenous approaches to addressing food insecurity. By providing better access to quality seeds, the projects is encouraging farmers to adopt improved seeds and therefore bring about a positive change in agriculture activities in food insecure areas.

The project financing has helped complete analysis of cash transfer programs and prepared a plan of implementing improved monitoring systems and cash transfer systems in 12 districts. While the financing for this sub-component is relatively small (current planned under US\$3 million), it will support improvements in government-financed cash transfer programs of over 8 billion rupees (approx US\$20 million) per year and help improve targeting and response to future vulnerability. Similarly discussions on the Community Challenge Fund to motivate behavioural changes by communities to address poor child nutrition have been instrumental in the Ministry of Local Development and the Poverty Alleviation Fund entering into a partnership to help communities address these problems by themselves. The findings from this pilot will be built into nutrition programs and mobilization activities of the Ministry of Local Development and the Poverty Alleviation Fund.