FORWARD Nepal

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FORWARD Nepal's Bulletin

This 34th issue of FORWARD Nepal's Bulletin provides a comprehensive update on project implementation progress in brief. It highlights institutional activities and events from November 16th, 2024, to March 13th, 2025. During this period, we continued with five projects: "Regional Programme for Scaling up the Multi-sectoral Approach for Nutrition Smart Village in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal-Phase II"; "Empowering Youth Entrepreneurs through Appropriate Horticultural Interventions in Nepal (YUVA)"; "The Enhanced Rural AI (TERAI) Project for Smallholder Dairy Farmers in Nepal"; "USAID/Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Horticulture South Asia Regional Hub"; and "Grassroots Civil Society Organizations as Promotors of Improved Food Systems and Equitable Livelihood Opportunities". In addition, several project concept papers and proposals have been submitted to various donor agencies for potential project partnerships and funding.

Highlights of this period include the AGM of FORWARD Nepal along with election/nomination of new Executive Board, Participation in international conference and agri-fair at Agriculture and Forestry University, Semi-Annual Review and Planning Workshop of the TERAI Project, Deep boring construction in Suddhodhan RM etc. Additionally, project monitoring visits were conducted by head office staff and relevant project donors, and financial monitoring took place at both the central office and project offices.

Major project activities conducted

1. Regional Programme for Promoting a multi-sectoral approach for Nutrition Smart Villages in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India – Phase II

Key activities of the project in this period are:

- **Participation of NSC-FORWARD team in NSC National workshop**

The NSC-FORWARD team took part in the National Consultation Workshop on "Nutrition Smart Community: An Innovation in Food System Transformation for Nutrition Security," facilitated by WHH on February 17, 2025. The event, chaired by Mr. Pustak Raj Ojha, Vice-Chairperson of FORWARD Nepal, featured technical sessions on integrating nutrition into provincial development, shared NSC learnings, and introduced the Child Growth Monitor (CGM) digital tool. The workshop concluded with a community voices session and a panel discussion on strengthening collaborative pathways for nutrition-smart communities.

- **Field Visit by the MPAC, Provincial and Federal Stakeholders in the NSC project sites**

In this quarter, LPAC meetings and field monitoring visits were conducted in both Saptari and Rautahat districts. Stakeholders visited local initiatives such as SIFS farms, kitchen gardens of malnourished children, and seed collection centers. A joint visit in Sap-tari by provincial (MOALD, NPC, DWSSM) and federal (Health Directorate, Federal Water Supply, WASDO) stakeholders highlighted community-driven innovations and impact stories from the NSC and WASH projects. The visit was facilitated by FORWARD Nepal, MCDC, and WHH.

- **Dissemination of Nutritional status of under five children at Saptari**

On December 11, 2024, a meeting was held at Rajgadh Rural Municipality disseminated the nutritional status of under-five children, spotlighting acute malnutrition and its causes. The Municipal Chief emphasized the need for a dedicated nutrition budget, proposing its inclusion in the upcoming extended municipal assembly—marking a critical step toward addressing malnutrition locally.

- **Community handover of SIFS**

The SIFS initiative was formally handed over to lead farmers and facilitators in both districts, involving 24 participants. Key plans include regular farmers' group meetings, municipal-level FFS group registration, seed bank establishment in each ward, vermicompost promotion, and arranging training through municipal support to enhance farming practices.

- **Material support of local seed collection and conservation center & the LANN entrepreneur groups**

Two local seed centers received essential materials. For LANN entrepreneur groups, one group received a grinder to produce Nutri-Mix (*Sarbottam Pitho*), while seven others were supported with accessories for food safety. Additionally, gender-friendly mini-agricultural tools were distributed to 30 farmer groups to promote climate-smart practices and com-munity sustainability.

2. Empowering Youth Entrepreneurs through Appropriate Horticulture Interventions in Nepal - YUVA funded by USAID Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Horticulture, UC Davis and WHH

Key activities of the project in this period are:

- **Participation in an international conference and agri-fair at Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU)**

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AFU, Faculty of Agriculture, organized an Interna-tional Conference on "Agricultural Transformation for Sustainable Food System" from 2 to 4 February, 2025, in Rampur Chitwan, in collaboration with GoN, WHH, FORWARD Nepal, and other agencies. The YUVA project presented the findings of the 'Aspiration Mapping, Income Needs, and Livelihoods Assets for Youths' among the participants in the event, and AFU published the abstract of this study report.

YUVA project/FORWARD Nepal presented the chimney solar dryer among the visitors during the AFU-organized Agri-Fair 2024 at AFU during December 14-18, 2024 (5 days). This remained one of the best places to showcase the chimney solar dryer technology among the experts, students, MSMEs, and farmers for the value addition of the vegetables and other farm products

- **Vegetable seeds support for the youth researcher farmers of the YUVA project**

The YUVA project supports farm inputs for the youth researcher farmers in each season for the biological research in Kapilvastu, Dang, and Arghakhanchi districts of Lumbini Province. The seeding materials were supported in the differently sized open field cultivation research plots (1,500 sq.m., 2,000 sq.m., and 2,500 sq.m.) and in the vegetable farming in protective structures during winter 2024. The crops were identified during the winter season of 2023, and a variety of the selected vegetable types were identified and supported as per the market demand and the interest of the youth researchers. The project supported the seeds of okra, capsicum, cowpea, bitter gourd, watermelon, radish, and tomato, including the mulching plastic, nursery tray, peat moss, yellow trap, and white thread for planting.

- **Selection Trellis Fellows**

YUVA project/FORWARD Nepal selected the Trellis Fellows under the Trellis Fellowship Fund pro-gramme for the year 2025. Mr. Emmanuel Owusu, Sustainable Agric. and Environ. Science, Lincoln University, and Mr. Dipesh Oli, Graduate Research Assistant, College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, Kentucky State University, USA, were selected to contribute to the YUVA project.

- **Call for thesis research grant to the MSc Agriculture Students**

YUVA Project/FORWARD Nepal announced the call for the thesis grant support for the MSc Agriculture students from Agriculture and Forestry University. Three of the calls were made targeting the students on (i) economic analysis of post-harvest activities (i.e., sorting and grading, marketing practices, etc.) in vegetables; (ii) efficiency of Zero Energy Cold Chamber (ZECC) in Plains, Foothills, and Mid Hills; and (iii) effectiveness of coaching and mentoring mechanisms by project-hired technicians, virtual modes, and agriculture technicians at the local level from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management, Department of Horticulture, and Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, respectively. A one-day orientation session was organized in the Department of Horticulture. Students from all three departments applied for the research grant support.

- **Technical Support to the Youth Researcher Farmers during the Project Pause Period**

The Horticulture Innovation Lab has received the "Stop Work Order" notice from USAID, issued in accordance with President Trump's Executive Order, Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, signed on January 20, 2025. Per the Executive Order, during the review period of the Horti-culture Innovation Lab, the project team provided the youth researcher farmers with technical support and a data-keeping process by occasional field visits and virtual mode. The Horticulture Innovation Lab received a notice of termination from USAID on February 25, 2025.

3. Enhanced Rural AI (TERAI) Project for Smallholder Dairy Farmers in Nepal funded by JOA/ADRA

Key activities of the project in this period are:

- **Exposure Visit for Milk Producer Cooperative Farmers**

An exposure visit was organized on 11th and 12th December 2024 for 35 farmers from Kapilvastu. The group visited Mr. Bholanath Lamichhane's farm in Nawalparasi East to learn about the challenges and success factors of commercial dairy farming. On Day II, they explored Annapurna Milk Producer Cooperative in Chitwan and Mr. Chet Prasad Dhakal's large-scale dairy farm in Ratnanagar, where they learned about the milk collection system and the potential of Holstein Friesian cattle.

- **Animal Health Camps**

The Livestock Service Section of Buddhabhumi Municipality organized animal health camps in various wards, with TERAI Project supporting with medicines worth NRs 70,000 and technical assistance. A total of 3,030 animals belonging to 644 farmers were treated during the camps held between 31st December 2024 and 2nd January 2025.

- **Training on Proposal Writing**

A three-day training on proposal writing was held from 21st - 23rd January 2025 for 35 farmers from Kapilvastu. The training focused on leadership development, proposal writing for cattle and buffalo farming, and guidance on filling government subsidy formats, enabling farmers to tap into government re-sources effectively.

- **Semi-Annual Review and Planning Workshop**

On 3rd and 4th February 2025, a semi-annual review and planning workshop took place at Maharaja Re-sort, Butwal. The workshop shared the physical and financial progress of the project from August 2024 to January 2025, discussed challenges, and outlined plans for the next six months (Feb–July 2025).

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- **Visit by ADRA and Partners**

Visitors from ADRA UK, ADRA Nepal, IRDC Ne-pal, and FORWARD Nepal visited Banganga Milk Producer Cooperative on 25th February 2025. They observed the milk collection and pricing systems, interacted with dairy farmers, and evaluated project support such as feed grinders, milk cans, and shed improvements.

4. Grassroots Civil Society Organizations as Promoters of Improved Food Systems and Equitable Livelihood Opportunities funded by BMZ/WHH

Key activities of the project in this period are:

- **Improvements of cattle shed for 220 households**

A total of 73 cattle shed improvements were completed in this reporting period across Suddhodhan, Mayadevi, and Yasodhara RMs, bringing the cumulative total to 203. These improved sheds facilitate urine collection for use as liquid manure or organic pesticide. The project supported materials (cement, bricks) up to NPR 12,500, while beneficiaries pro-vided labor and local materials.

- **Irrigation support for smallholder farmer groups**

Deep boring construction was initiated in Suddho-dhan RM following vendor selection and a partner-ship agreement with the local government. A draft report for shallow boring identified 22 potential shal-low tube wells across all wards of the three RMs.

- **Support off-farm livelihoods of 450 households with TVET**

Seven trained mushroom farmers received tools and materials (mushroom seed, black plastic, thread rope, plastic bags, watering cans) for commercial-scale production. Additionally, tools and equipment were distributed to participants of bike repair and plumbing TVET training. Forty youths completed a 190 hours training program. Materials were distributed in the presence of RM chairpersons. Vendor selection for 10 new firms has been completed and activities will commence next month.

- **Three-days GAP training and one 1-day refresher training**

Three-day GAP refresher training was conducted for Community Facilitators and Social Change Agents. Sessions covered GAP principles, pest and disease management, sustainable practices, post-harvest handling, agri-insurance, business planning, and use of modern tools. A field exposure visit included cold storage and vermicompost production sites in Bhuddhabhumi Municipality, Kapilvastu.

- **1,800 Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) sessions for 4500 households at village level**

GAP sessions (1st to 4th) were conducted across 66 groups, with 1,667 participants (52 men, 1,615 women) in initial sessions and 1,418 participants (41 men, 1,377 women) in the fourth session. Topics included GAP overview, nutrition-sensitive farming, integrated plant nutrient management, and moong bean cultivation. Participants received seasonal seeds and EM and Dhaincha for demonstration to promote crop diversity and soil enrichment.

5. USAID/FtF Innovation Lab for Horticulture South Asia Regional Hub

The key project activities during the period are:

- **Agriculture Transformation in Nepal (AgT) Technical Committee Kick-off Meeting**

The Regional Hub Manager participated in the AgT technical committee kick-off meeting on 15th November 2024. The hybrid meeting brought together key stakeholders from Winrock International, CEAPRED, FORWARD Nepal, IIDS, Cross Boundary, and Banyan Global. Focused on localization and $9 million in business development, the meeting also highlighted a $100 million agribusiness financing plan contributing to the GoN's Decade on Agricultural Investment, with a target to benefit 500,000 households.

- **National Horticulture Seminar 2024: Strengthening Seed Sector**

The Regional Hub Manager attended the National Horticulture Seminar 2024 on 25-26 November 2024, organized by the Nepal Horticulture Society and MoALD. The seminar focused on strengthening the seed sector of potato, vegetables, and spice crops, featuring presentations and discussions with horticulturists and experts from various sectors.

- **National Food System Dialogue 2024**

On 2nd December 2024, the Program Director and Regional Hub Manager represented FORWARD Nepal at the National Food System Dialogue. Organized by the National Planning Commission, the dialogue addressed key issues such as agricultural land use, food system transformation, climate smart villages, and the GoN's Decade on Agricultural Investment.

- **USAID Integrated Nutrition Activity (INA) Co-Creation and Technical Sharing Meeting**

The Regional Hub Manager participated in the USAID INA co-creation and technical sharing meeting on 13th December 2024. Stakeholders from various organizations discussed food security, emphasizing optimal consumption, good agricultural practices, processed food standardization, and integrating nutrition education into academic curricula.

- **Connecting Nutrition Actors for Greater Impact: System Strengthening Dialogue**

On 19th December 2024, the Regional Hub Manager attended a dialogue on nutrition actors and system strengthening. The event brought together key stakeholders to discuss Nepal's food system transformation, multisectoral collaboration, and the potential for the GoN's Human Meal Bank initiative.

- **GIS Mapping and Remote Sensing in Agriculture Training**

The Regional Hub Manager participated in a GIS Mapping and Remote Sensing training on 21-22 January 2025 at the Department of Horticulture, AFU. The

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training, part of the Urban and Peri-Urban Horticulture Project, aimed to enhance agricultural practices through GIS and remote sensing technologies for faculty members from various colleges.

6. Feed The Future Nepal Agricultural Transformation funded by USAID/Winrock International

A letter contract was signed between Winrock International and FORWARD Nepal on 17th November 2024 to start work immediately, mobilize personnel, conduct project start-up for consultation and organise project planning and coordination meetings/ workshops at the Federal and Province levels. The Program Director from FORWARD Nepal was involved in these events.

Training/Workshop/Meeting

- **On 20-24th January 2025:** The USAID, Win-rock team and PD of FORWARD Nepal visited Madhesh province and Bagmati province to share the Agricultural Transformation initiatives to Chief Minister of Madhesh province, secretary of MOLMAC, NARC, and private sectors. The team also met secretary of MOALD, Bagmati province, ADO of Chitwan, AFU and NARC.
- **On 3rd and 4th February 2025:** a semi-annual review and planning workshop took place at Maharaja Resort, Butwal attended by Livestock Development Specialist of TERAI Project, the Executive Director and the Senior Admin and Finance Officer.
- **From 4th to 8th February 2025:** The Pro-gram Director attended the five-day Food Systems Ambition Workshop, which provided WHH staff and partners with valuable in-sights into food systems. The workshop in-cluded critical reflections, a group exercise on the Theory of Change, and field visits to Maramche and the Biodiversity Information Centre in Sundaridanda, Pokhara.
- **On 17th February 2025:** The NSC-FORWARD team participated in the Nation-al Consultation Workshop on "Nutrition Smart Community: An Innovation in Food System Transformation for Nutrition Security," facilitated by WHH.
- **On 20th February 2025:** District-level meeting of NGO Federation Chitwan was held, focusing on preparations for the 30th General Assembly and 11th General Convention in Kathmandu and electing representatives from Chitwan.
- **On 9th March 2025:** The Board Secretary of FORWARD Nepal attended a capacity building program focusing on local level elected leaders and climate change conducted by NGO Federation, Chitwan in Kalika Municipality. The program aimed to bring together the non-government sector and local elected leaders to discuss scientific and indigenous practices for protecting climate and biodiversity, as well as reducing disasters and their risks.
- **On 10th and –11th March 2025:** 30th General Assembly and 11th General Convention organized by the NGO Federation. From Chit-wan, FORWARD Nepal Executive Board Secretary and PI, YUVA Project participated. The Central Committee members were elected.

Staff Turnover

- **On 2nd February 2025:** Mr. Jhalak Bahadur Thapa, joined the Food System Project as the Enterprise Development Officer.
- **On 18th January 2025:** Mr. Deepak Mandal, the Nutrition and Advocacy Officer for the NSC project, resigned from his duties.
- **On 1st March 2025**: Agriculture Officers Ms. Sweety Gupta, Mr. Ram Chandra Pandit and Project Advocacy Officer, Mr. Sanjay Kumar Pandit completed their tenure following the closure of the NSC project.

Visitors

- **On 28th November 2024:** Kushum Kishor Bhatta and Rajendra Rajbhandari (AWO International) visited FORWARD Nepal for the purpose of providing an overview of the financial guidelines for the project proposal.
- **On 20th December 2024:** Prem Raj Neupane, Biswas Bastola, and Bijaya Dallakoti (NTNC) visited the FORWARD Office to discuss the possibility of a partnership between FORWARD Nepal and the National Trust for Nature Conservation.
- **On 9th March 2025**, Dr Niraj Prakash Joshi, Associate Professor from Hiroshima University, Japan and in charge of ARDL, Center for Peace and Sustainable Future (CePeaS) visited FORWARD Nepal and shared that a new project on "Climate Justice for Southeast and South Asia Health impacts of Climate Change in Mountainous Areas of Vietnam and Nepal" has been approved for funding by the donor agency, where FORWARD Nepal will work as the project implementing partner for Nepal.
- **On 23rd January 2025,** Alexis Elicott, Chief of Party, along with Deputy COPs Menila Kharel and Praveen Baidya from Winrock International, and Navin Hada, USAID Feed the Future Coordinator, visited the FORWARD Office for discussions on the way forward and planning regarding the Agriculture Transformation Project.
- **On 19th February 2025,** Sujit Kumar Sah, Dev Raj Chaudhary, and Sharad Adhikari from ADRA Nepal, visited for a partner assessment on technical, financial, and MEAL aspects.

Institutional activities/events:

- **On 31st January, 2025:** Staff from various districts, head office, and board members participated in the annual result sharing and capacity building session focused on Lean Management and GenderUp.
- **On 1st February, 2025:** FORWARD Nepal held its 28th Annual General Meeting and 12th General Convention, electing new board members, followed by a family picnic.

Some Glimpses

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Landless after TVET training and input support working in his shop.

Farmers under the YUVA project carrying out nursery establishment for kitchen garden

Visit of Central Team of Feed the Future USAID Nepal Agricultural Transformation at FORWARD Nepal, Chitwan

Farmer under Food System Project after harvesting Indigenous *Kala Namak* Rice

Group photo after 28th Annual General Meeting of FORWARD Nepal

Handover of Solar Chimney Dryer to Department of Horticulture, AFU

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