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FORWARD Nepal's Bulletin

The current COVID-19 pandemic has obviously made us difficult to operate our programme as usual, however we continued our programs what we could do best to deliver services to our clients with due respecting and obeying the instructions and guidelines issued by the federal, provincial and local governments as well as donor agencies to cope with the situation. We adapted observant strategies to implement the project activities in the field with necessary adjustments of project activities based on local context in coordination with concerned project stakeholders.

The 20th issue of FORWARD Nepal's Bulletin highlights the major activities and events conducted by the organization during Chaitra 2076 to Asadh 2077 (14th March to 15th July 2020). Two projects namely, 'Sustainable Economic Development of Rural Areas (SEDRA)' and 'Exploratory research: Agricultural entrepreneurship among female-headed remittance receiving households in Nepal' have been successfully completed. Continuous efforts have been made for developing and submitting new project proposals and concept papers, to different donor agencies for funding support. Among the proposals submitted, some were in response to the proposals called by donors and a few were new concepts. We have been verbally informed that a vegetable farming demonstration project to the smallholder farmers in KECC/KOICA project sites of Nawalparasi district is about to award FORWARD Nepal but it has been delayed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Unlike in other time, our physical presence in the meetings/seminars and monitoring of projects in the fields were not possible due to COVID-19 pandemic situation. However, we participated on online meetings, seminars and trainings organized by different organizations. We also conducted virtual meetings with project staffs related to project progress update and on matters of staff welfare.

Major project activities during the period

1. **Regional Programme for promoting a multi-sectoral approach for Nutrition Smart Villages in Bangladesh, Nepal and India, implemented jointly with FORWARD Nepal and Aasaman Nepal, following activities were carried out:**

Project Feasibility Study by MART Consultant: The first phase of the project will phase out in November 2020. So, the project feasibility study was organized virtually in the first week of May 2020 by MART consultant with Mr. Netra Pratap Sen, Executive Director for FORWARD Nepal, Mr. Nawal Kishor Yadav, Executive Director for Aasaman Nepal, project coordinators and stakeholders from Rautahat and Saptari. Evaluation was based on discussion on progress status of nutrition sensitive microplanning, nutrition camp, nutrition garden and integrated farming system, institution strengthening and LANN+. Discussion depicted that project has moved on the line of expected outputs and field evaluation was planned to happen later. For this purpose, 60 villages were ranked on the basis of progress made on the above mentioned five aspects. The ranking categorized one village as good one (Rautahat), 53 as moderate (32 in Rautahat and 21 in Saptari) and 6 (3 each in Rautahat and Saptari) villages as poor which required improvement.

Soap Distribution: Social mobilizers (SMs) were oriented about safety measures in the context of COVID-19 before they departed to distribute soaps from door to door in the community. They were provided surgical mask enough to wear new one each day, sanitizer, disposable gloves. They reached 3,600 (1,440 in Saptari and 2,160 in Rautahat) households (HHs) of 120 LANN+ groups and provided 3 Life buoy® 50g soaps per HH and demonstrated methods of hand washing and explained its importance as preventive measure against COVID-19. SMs also raised awareness of social distancing and following lockdown rules unless they have urgent works to go out. They also counseled about importance of early and exclusive breast feeding, complementary feeding

and personal hygiene for improving nutrition in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

Promotion of Nutrition Garden/ Integrated Farming Systems:

Late summer vegetable seeds (okra, long yard beans, Amaranthus and different gourds) were procured and distributed to support nutrition gardens of 7,200 (2,880 in Saptari and 4,320 in Rautahat) HHs. Champion Excellent Group Leaders (EGLs) and Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) were oriented about safety measures and planting methods of vegetables. They distributed the kits from door to door and explained about planting methods to the beneficiaries. They also counseled neither to use the seeds for consumption nor to feed to animals and birds. It aimed at improving production and availability of diverse safe foods in their own garden for consumption. The project also supported Community level nursery growers with brinjal seeds, plastic sheet, nets and bamboo to produce quality seedlings and provide the beneficiaries to promote integrated farming system. EGLs were also provided Sacks, bamboo and ropes, and oriented to promote kite-kitchen gardening and sack gardening.

Awareness Campaign: Before lockdown, hand washing stations were established at 6 health posts of Rajgadh and one at project office, Rajbiraj to promote safe hand washing. SMs were provided pamphlets of corona virus (message with symptoms and preventive measures) and methods of hand washing and oriented to counsel beneficiaries about the pamphlets. Miking of COVID-19 message with symptoms and its preventive measures were announced at all wards of Rajgadh, Saptari. Radio jingle on the same message was aired through local FM in Rautahat. Preparation and miking of messages on social distancing, use of mask, hand washing/ use of sanitizer; consumption of diverse food groups, locally available fruits and vegetables to increase immunity was done twice a week at Palikas. Radio jingle on liquid manure (Jholmal) is being aired through local FM from July 2020. Radio jingle on Vitamin A Campaign was also aired during 2-6 July 2020 to raise awareness and inform the beneficiaries. Wall painting at school compound wall and hand pump platform at each ward of Rajgadh RMC was initiated in July 2020.

Webinar: The project staff participated in different webinars related to food and nutrition security in context of COVID-19 pandemic. Webinar on 'COVID-19 Crisis- Preparedness for post lockdown for promotion of integrated farming and nutrition gardens for own food production' was organized by Welthungerhilfe on 20th May, 2020. Project implementing partners from Bangladesh, India and Nepal along with

organizer and other concerned agencies participated in the webinar. A total of 12 presentations were made and Dr. Bedanand Chaudhary, Project Coordinator, from Nepal presented on two topics; Community Level Nursery and Preparation and Use of *Jholmal* (Liquid manure and bio-pesticide). Similarly, next webinar was organized on 'Local Recipe' on 10th June 2020 where Mr. Sajjan Yogesh, Project Coordinator, presented local recipe on Sarbottam Pitho. Project staffs also participated in other webinars like 'Role of Community Seed Bank' for seed management in crisis, sustainable production and consumption, gained knowledge and information about COVID-19, its preventive measures and safety measures to be adopted while working with the community.

IEC Materials: During the period, several messages for poster were prepared. They included awareness about locust control methods, handwashing methods, preventive measures against COVID-19 and distributed to the beneficiaries and service providers. Brochure on Nutrition Sensitive Sustainable Integrated Farming System was prepared both in English and Nepali Language and was submitted to WHH.

2. Building livelihood resilience and nutrition security in the Kamala River Basin, Siraha district, Nepal, the following activities were carried out:

Revitalization of Farmers Groups: The livelihood project revitalized 153 farmers groups (FG) in total; 138 farmers groups and 15 riverbed-farming groups during lockdown for COVID-19 pandemic through support on their constitution and registration process. In this regards, draft of constitution of 153 FG were prepared and shared to groups for their review and signature. Similarly, for their registration, a couple of informal meetings have been done with agriculture officers of Kalyanpur, Karjanha and Siraha municipalities in March, May and June, 2020.

Support Farmers for Green Veggies at Local Level:

As humanitarian assistance to farmers, the project has supported quality seeds of vegetables for late summer season. In this regards, 349 farmers from 15 farmers groups were selected to support for semi commercial vegetable farming from three municipalities. After seed supports, farmers were capacitated for vegetable growing through 40 training sessions in small groups with protective measures and physical distancing, in which total 324 farmers participated. In addition, more than 2,760 farmers from 123 farmers groups were also supported improved seeds for kitchen gardening which consisted seasonal vegetable seeds such as seeds of chilly, eggplant, okra, sponge gourd, bottle gourd, cucumber, bitter gourd and cow bean. The seed distribution has been made possible under

COVID-19 induced curfew with strong coordination with District Coordination Committee, Siraha.

Support and Mobilization of Local Resource Persons (LRPs) : All 25 LRPs have received seasonal vegetable seeds supports in May, 2020. Three meetings have been organized to orient LRPs on semi-commercial vegetable farming and their mobilization in May, 2020. After orientation, they were mobilized for delivering 40 sessions of semi commercial vegetable farming at farmer level. Beside these, they were also mobilized to identify potential sites for irrigations and irrigation installations at communities.

Riverbed farming: In spite of threats from wild life depredation and limited agriculture services, people have identified that riverbed farming is one of the best cash based farming system in Kamala river basin. After intervention of livelihood project, people were trained on good RBF technology. As a result, cultivated land area increased from 233.8 ha in 2018/19 to 365.1 ha in 2019/20 with increased number of farmers from 368 to 431. However, farmers did not receive good returns from RBF this year due to lockdown for COVID-19 pandemic led market inaccessibility.

Establishment of revolving fund: After round of assessment of cooperatives, the project team has identified 12th cooperatives for revolving fund establishment. Maa Kali Mahila Sana Kishan Sahakari Samstha was identified in Siraha-15 and a revolving fund was handed over in presence of ward chairperson as a result, the project has successfully established planned 12 revolving funds in three project municipalities. After establishing revolving funds, cooperatives have started to mobilize revolving fund. So far, 42 farmers were benefited, who got an access to credits for goat farming, vegetable farming and paddy farming in cheaper interest rate i.e. 12% interest rate in comparison to at least 16% in cooperatives and 36% to 48% in personal loan.

Construction of Market-shed cum emergency shelter houses: The construction of market-shed cum emergency shelter house has been restarted at Siraha-11, Bhaluwahi bazar during lockdown period. Though COVID-19 pandemic has retarded the pace of construction, above 90% progress on construction by end of June, 2020 has been achieved.

Supporting the local government in the annual participatory planning: Two refresher workshops were organized for annual participatory planning processes (PPP) of local governments in June, 2020. A total of 74 people participated in these workshops in Karjanha and Kalyanpur. As a result of joint effort of FORWARD Nepal, Aasaman Nepal and Mukti

Nepal, both municipalities have called municipal council meeting on Ashad 10th, 2077 and passed policies, programme and budget by Ashad 31st, 2077. After the successful completion of the meeting, Karjanha municipality has allocated NPR 10 million for agriculture, which was only NPR 3 Million in last year. Similarly, Kalyanpur municipality has doubled the budget of agriculture in this fiscal year.

Set up irrigation facilities: So far 21 shallow boring have been installed that are benefiting more than 410 farmers in project municipalities. Out of 21 shallow tubes, 19 shallow borings have been installed in project site after lockdown. Out of 19 shallow boring, seven boring have been installed in Karjanha municipality, which has capacity to irrigate 30 Ha lands. Similarly, seven and five shallow boring have installed to irrigate 17.5 Ha and 13.5 Ha of land in Siraha and Kalyanpur respectively. Besides these, installation of irrigation schemes are also being continued. The project has also handed over equipment and materials for shallow boring to install additional 13 schemes consisting 7 schemes in Siraha, 5 schemes in Kalyanpur and a scheme in Karjanha.

Monitoring Visit of District Coordination Committee: Vice Coordinator of district coordination committee of Siraha district, Mr. Saroj Kumar Yadav, has monitored and supported the project intervention under lockdown for COVID-19. Amid curfew for COVID-19 pandemic, he supported to disseminate summer season vegetables seed for semi commercial and kitchen gardening as project adopted proper precautionary measures. He visited Karjanha and Kalyanpur municipality including hand over of seeds to a groups of semi commercial farming at Kalyanpur-7.

3. Dairy for Development in Nepal project, the following activities were carried out:

Preparation of short videos: Three different kinds of short videos were prepared on different beneficiaries. Two videos on demonstration of preparation of balanced feed for cattle by using locally available feed ingredients were captured through participation of leader farmers Ms. Meena Bohora and Ms. Maya Basyal from Nawalpur district. Likewise, project beneficiary Mr. Ram Prasad Adhikari, Chitwan-based animal health technician was selected to convey the benefits and his experiences, while associating with dairy farmers through project. Main objective of the short videos were to disseminate technologies adapted by farmers and share success stories of the project.

Revision on budget: Looking at the impact of lockdown situation, budget was revised to provision to install feed mixtures in three remote dairy

cooperatives, so that balanced feed will be continuously available to the smallholder dairy farmers during harsh situations like strike, lockdown, etc. Similarly, budget was also allocated for support of forage seeds and fodder saplings to dairy farmers for round year forage and fodder production.

Information on the impact of COVID-19 collected:

Questionnaires were developed to gather information on the impact of COVID-19 on different stakeholders like dairy farmers, dairy cooperatives, agro-vets, Livestock Service Section of local governments (on service delivery and strategies developed thereof), dairy industries, monetary and financial institutions (MFIs). Later, the information collected was entered on Google form for analysis.

4. Strengthening Community Resilience to Disaster through School Safety Initiative (SCRSSI) Project in Sunsari district:

Construction of flood resistant Gender responsive, disability inclusive and disaster resistant WASH facilities in the school which includes menstrual hygiene facility for girls: On the basis of VCA, risks were identified at Auliya Secondary School, Janak Secondary School and Saraswati Secondary School last year. For mitigation of those risks, 6 construction activities have completed like school compound, water and hand wash station, and roof change of existing school building in Saraswati secondary school and water and hand wash station construction, roof change of existing school building in Janak secondary school of Barahakshetra Municipality of Sunsari. A total of 901 students (448 Boys and 453 Girls) and 50 teachers (32 male and 18 female) are benefiting from these safe and inclusive mitigation measures to enhance the capacity for DRR and CCA.

Coordination of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Measures in schools: A couple of coordination meetings with School Management Committee (SMC), municipalities' wards and Local Education Unit (LEU) were held to finalize the construction activities in schools. School Gardening is about to finish in Saraswati Secondary School and Janak secondary school of Barahakshetra Municipality. Besides school gardening, tree plantation are also planned in these inclusive meetings.

Preparation of education contingency plan and LDCRP (Local disaster and climate resilience plan): During lock down period, two municipal education contingency plans have been prepared for Ramdhuni and Barahakshetra Municipalities. In this regards, rounds of meetings were done with municipalities.

Support response and relief distribution: Supported

in relief distribution conducted by Plan International Nepal in coordination with municipality as response of COVID-19. Plan international Nepal have supported 1090 families of Barahakshetra Municipality ward no 1, 2 and 4, Sunsari with worth of Rs 2730 per family. FORWARD Nepal field staffs were involved in this programme.

5. Rice-fallow system with pulse crops in South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Nepal) Project in Siraha, the following activities were carried out:

- Yield data from 300 cluster demonstrations were collected, analysed and reported. The average yield of lentil was 900 kg/ha. The technology package for demonstration consisted of improved lentil varieties, seed priming, rhizobium inoculation, DAP fertilizer application and need based foliar spray of fungicides.
- 8500 kg seeds of lentil varieties like Kalo Musuro, Sital, Simal and Shisir was obtained from Village Based Seed Enterprise (VBSE) of 25 farmers affiliated to Jandibya Krisak Samuha Lahan-23, Gada; Gramin Krisak Samuha Lahan-20, Motipur; Salhesfulbari Biu Utpadan Krisak Samuha, Padariya Tharutol; Pargatishil Krisak Samuha, Lahan-22 Sisawani; and Mahila Krisak Samuha Lahan-12, Bhotia Tol.
- Project completion report for the entire project period (2016/17 to 2019/20) was prepared and submitted to IFAD/ICARDA.

6. Reducing disaster risks and enhancing emergency response capacities in multi-hazard risk prone areas in Ward No. 2 and 10 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City, Chitwan

Assessment of the COVID-19 situation at local level:

Urban DRR project looked closely on the situation of COVID-19 at project wards and Bharatpur metropolitan city and revisited the preparedness and response actions to save the community. Physical visit to these offices, review of secondary sources, and municipal and notice of the District Administration Office (DAO) was reviewed for preparedness and response action. Depending on the situation, it was of longer interval in the beginning phase of COVID-19 but was reported fortnightly, to UNDP, in the later stage.

Need assessment of the local government and the municipality:

Project team consulted with ward offices for three to four times for demand collection at ward level, including Disaster Management Committee (DMC), and the quarantine needs. Likely, material requisition/gap of the municipality was also compiled. The types of materials required, its quantity and estimated price was submitted to

UNDP, in every instance.

Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) survey: FORWARD Nepal, in support of enumerators and the project staffs, organized baseline KAP survey at household level and at the stakeholders' level by household visit and key informant interview (KII) method, respectively. As gathering and meeting modality was turned to individual visit and discussion, around 550 households were consulted by using mobile based open data kit (ODK) tool, and 14 institutions were consulted for the KII.

Assessment of the extant capacity of stakeholders and recording of GIS Coordinates: FORWARD Nepal collected the extant capacity of the disaster risk management allied stakeholders by using KOBO toolbox. Likely, GPS location of few public locations were compiled by mobilizing project team.

Assessment of fire services in Bharatpur Metropolitan city: Fire services of Bharatpur metropolitan city was assessed by the project team, by interviewing the fire brigade and the disaster management section of Bharatpur metropolitan city, and the report was submitted to UNDP.

Vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) of specified groups: Project team assessed the hazards, disaster historical map, disaster impacts to the specified groups, affected population, issues, impacts, remedial measures and capacity/resources in ward 2 and 10 of Bharatpur metropolitan city. Person with disability, old age people, landless people (in Amptari area – ward No. 2) were consulted for VCA. Likely, the population receiving social security allowance at ward no. 2 and 10 were also consulted by the project.

Meeting with ward level DMC: Ward level DMC meeting was organized to assess the small scale infrastructure works for disaster preparedness/reduction actions, and for the identification of structural/ non-structural support activities targeted to the vulnerable population in Ward No. 10.

Volunteer identification meeting: Project team consulted Tole Lead Organizations (TLOs), in piecemeal approach, to identify the community level volunteers for training and capacity building. There will be eight volunteers per TLOs.

- 7. Sustainable Economic Development of Rural Areas (SEDRA):** Though all the tasks as per contract agreement with Business & Finance Consulting for SEDRA project had already been completed and reported, we were requested to verify the banana tech-cards which has been rechecked/verified as correct and responded accordingly with little adjustment in the data presentation.

Training/Workshop/Meeting

During the reporting period of Chaitra 2076 to Ashad 2077, we participated in the following virtual meetings/seminars

- 26 June 2020, SCRSSI project team and Executive Director, FORWARD Nepal joined in a training session on overview of internal control fundamentals of the organizations organized by Plan International Nepal Country office. The role of partners in implementing, assessing and maintaining effective internal control systems of the partner organizations was oriented in the training.
- 24-25 June, 2020, SCRSSI project team attended an annual project review and reflection meeting with Plan International Nepal, Field Office, Sunsari. Six partner organizations of Plan International had participated and shared the progress of their partnership project in the meeting.
- 30 June 2020, Mr. Netra P Sen, Executive Director and Mr. Rishikesh Dhakal, Programme Manager had an introductory virtual meeting with Ms. Ilse du Pied, new Country Director of WHH who is now working from Amsterdam and awaiting international flights to resume to come to Nepal. Structural types of questions and answers were followed for guiding the discussion which included, organizational briefing of FORWARD Nepal, FORWARD-WHH partnership relations, current partnership project and effect of COVID-19 pandemic, strength and weaknesses of partnership and recommendation / suggestions for better partnership and cooperation.
- 18 June 2020, the project team of Nutrition smart Village (NSV) project and Executive Director participated in a virtual meeting on Participatory Planning Process and Microplanning under NPL 1058-18 organized by WHH. The objective of the meeting was how the project can tap the resources of government for the good practices of project supported activities like NERP, Model Farms, Mothers group meeting, community nursery etc. to make them sustainable. It was suggested project team to provide technical assistance to Palikas for the Palika level planning process even though they are busy with management of quarantines. This helps them to incorporate such NSV project activities into their next year's programme.

- 5 June 2020, Executive Director participated in a virtual meeting on Official Launching of Digitally Enabled Seed Information System under the USAID funded Nepal Seed and Fertilizer (NSAF) Project in coordination with Seed Quality Control Center (SQCC) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD) which has developed a Digitally Enabled Seed Information System (DESI). The platform includes a digital library (catalogue) of registered/released varieties as well as an online system that collects and collate in-country seed demand and supply data (Digital Seed Balance Sheet).

Staffing

Mr. Sujit Chaudhary, Sub-Engineer, left the Strengthening Community Resilience to Disaster through School Safety Initiative Project (SCRSSI) in Sunsari from on 1st June 2020.

There was a case reported of Corona virus infection to one of the staffs of NSV project partner – Aasaman Nepal in Rautahat where we have a common office but the staff has been recovered from sickness and returned back to office after sitting sometime in isolation. PCR test report of all other project team was reported negative.

Upcoming institutional major events:

- Audit of account for the year 2076/77 B.S.
- Submission of technical and audited financial report to DAO, Chitwan and SWC Kathmandu
- Annual tax clearance with Inland Revenue Office for the financial 2076/77
- Renewal of FORWARD Nepal's registration in DAO Office.
- 24th FORWARD DAY on 1st September 2020
- Annual programme review and reflection meeting (virtual) – September 2020.

Some Glimpses



Demo Hand washing, Saptari



World breastfeeding Week, Saptari



Workshop on Participatory Planning Process of Local Government at Kalyanpur, Siraha



Shallow Tube Irrigation Schemes Installation at Karjanha, Siraha



Earthquake based mock drill in Auliya school Barahakshetra Municipality Ward No. 1, Chatara, Sunsari