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Nutrition Collaborative Research Support Program Nutrition/CRSP – Asia

Annual Report, FY2010/11 (Year 1)



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The Global
Nutrition
CRSP



Nutrition Collaborative Research Support Program
Nutrition/CRSP – Asia

Annual Report
FY2010/11 (Year 1)

Submitted by the
Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy
Tufts University
Boston

Nutrition Collaborative Research Support Program – Asia

Annual Report 2010/11 (Year 1)

Foreword

The mission of the Nutrition Collaborative Research Support Program - Asia (N/CRSP-Asia) is to discover how policy and program interventions can most effectively achieve large scale improvements in maternal and child nutrition. Bringing together resources from host country institutions and US universities, the N/CRSP-Asia emphasizes operationally relevant research that can support national governments across Asia in their attempts to improve nutrition, health, and agricultural productivity. The Management Entity (Tufts University) collaborates with a network of US partners, including the Schools of Public Health at Harvard University and Johns Hopkins University, the College of Agriculture at Purdue University and the College of Agricultural, Environmental, and Natural Sciences at Tuskegee University. It also has formal partnerships with private sector entities (Development Alternatives, Inc.), and non-governmental agencies, including Nepal Technical Advisory Service and Helen Keller International.

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Nutrition CRSP - Asia

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1. Introduction

The Nutrition Research Support Program (CRSP) for Asia is a new kind of CRSP. It represents a novel model for focusing US-supported research on food and nutrition issues in developing countries. This includes, i) a geographic focus (following USAID *Feed the Future* priority regions and countries), ii) an applied focus (operations research rather than discovery science), iii) a focus on country-ownership (supporting research that informs nationally-defined priorities in food and nutrition), iv) resources allocated to large grants to work at scale (rather than many small grants supporting studies of experimental or pilot activities), and v) building capacity for analysis and policy formulation through formal education activities as well as engagement of local partners at stages of the research agenda.

Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy was awarded the Nutrition Collaborative Research Support Program (N/CRSP) for Asia in October 2010 as well as the N/CRSP for Africa. The Friedman School serves as the management entity (ME) for both activities, in close partnership with several US university partners – Tuskegee, Purdue, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University – as well as Development Alternatives, Inc.

This report outlines achievements against the approved implementation plan for Year 1, covering October 4, 2010 to October 3, 2011. Specific measurable goals laid out in the first year's plan of work are highlighted in boxes (with the page number of the implementation plan in parentheses), along with the status of such goals (achieved or not) and details relating to achievements (or reasons for lack of achievement) are elaborated in the subsequent text.

2. Governance and Management Entity Activities

This section focuses on the global activities lead by Tufts as Management Entity of both Asia and Africa CRSPs. The synergies and cost-savings gained by having a single lead for both CRSP activities are substantial, allowing for effective cross-continent sharing of ideas among partners and the development of a central repository (website and workspace) for materials, papers, reports relevant to N/CRSP activities globally.

Defined goals and achievements - Year 1 (Management)

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 2.1 "A Board of Directors will be convened." [p2] | –Achieved |
| 2.2 "Establish a global Technical Advisory Committee." [p2] | - Achieved |
| 2.3 "Development and finalization of a policies and procedures manual." [p3] | - Achieved |
| 2.4 "Development and set up of a functional website and workspace." [p6] | –Achieved |
| 2.5 "Bibliographies on nutrition, health and agriculture will be developed and uploaded to the workspace for access by core partners". [p10] | –Achieved |
| 2.6 "Produce dissemination materials (project brochures)." [p10] | –Achieved |
| 2.7 "Develop the appropriate in-country management structures." [p7] | –Achieved |
| 2.8 "Build [institutional] partnerships with local institutions." [p6] | –Achieved |

2.1. Board of Directors will be convened – Achieved.

As per the approved implementation plan for Year 1, the N/CRSP focused its early efforts on developing governance and management structures for the Asia CRSP, and linking that to the Africa CRSP to secure intellectual synergies and cost-savings. To that end, a ‘global’ Board of Directors was convened in the first 6 months of the program to oversee both N/CRSPs (Asia and Africa), defining CRSP policies, offering guidance on budgets and management, and advising on strategic and programming issues. The BoD comprises representatives from each of the ME’s partner institutions (Tuskegee, Harvard, Purdue, Johns Hopkins University, and Development Alternatives, Inc.); and invitees from a range of other international organizations (see Appendix 1).

2.2. Establish a Technical Advisory Committee – Achieved.

At the same time, a technical committee (the TAC) was established to work in parallel with the BoD, but focusing more on substantive issues relating to the research and capacity-building activities under the CRSPs. The TAC has additional representatives from each of the core partners, in addition to technical experts from various institutions around the globe, such as UN agencies, the CGIAR system, and/or other universities and non-profit/non-governmental organizations. The individuals invited to serve on the TAC have specific knowledge of the issues and/or the regions of concern.

The first meeting of the Board of Directors (BoD) took place on January 6th, 2011, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on January 7th. A second meeting of the BoD was convened on March 18, 2011. Minutes for all 3 meetings are posted on the N/CRSP website: www.nutritioncrsp.ning.com (and appended to this report). A number of key decisions were taken during the Year 1 meetings of the BoD and TAC, including:

- a) The Nutrition CRSPs will support the development of a robust evidence base for links between agriculture, nutrition and health, and for effective integrated interventions that will provide the basis for a “next Lancet Series”.
- b) The focus of research will be on the effectiveness and scalability of interventions including, but not limited to:
 - i) taking efficacy results of key interventions and seeing how they perform at scale;
 - ii) identifying interaction effects between interventions;
 - iii) considering agricultural interventions in terms of direct and indirect nutrition impacts;
 - iv) identifying linkages among agriculture, nutrition and health interventions (including attention to water and infectious diseases, as well as gender).
- c) Core partners will focus on research and capacity building in both Nepal and Uganda. All partners will develop work plans that will focus on research priorities and capacity gaps identified at the country level. Core partners will complement each other’s work around research issues that are specific to Nepal and Uganda
- d) Capacity building activities will target Nepali and Ugandan students/professionals through distance learning, research and methods workshops, short term training, MS degree programs with an emphasis on cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral training.
- e) The Nutrition CRSP will report against a core list of indicators defined by USAID, in addition to collecting data relevant to answering specific research questions. Important issues

relevant to attribution will be discussed with USAID/Nepal. The ME is in charge of aggregating data and the knowledge management system.

- f) Development of a workspace (community of practice) and public website for exchanging ideas and sharing publications and findings relevant to the research of the Global Nutrition CRSP
- g) Development of a lasting global network, larger than just CRSP partners of nutrition and agriculture professionals working on the intersection between these two areas. At the end of five years, a legacy will be to establish a large community network of knowledge and practice. This network will also provide an outlet for disseminating working papers.

2.3. Finalize Policies and Procedures – Achieved.

In addition, within the context of structure and governance, the following key actions and/or decisions were taken, including:

- a) The drafting and approval of a Policies and Procedures manual, now posted on the N/CRSP workspace website (www.nutritioncrsp.ning.com) and the open site (www.nutritioncrsp.org) (appended to this report).
- b) The Nutrition CRSP requires local presence in Uganda and Nepal (accordingly both in Nepal and Uganda, Nutrition CRSP Coordinators have been identified and hired).
- c) The Nutrition CRSP will prepare an annual report in narrative form.
- d) Each core partner will provide an annual report that will be aggregated by the ME with the complete report attached as an annex.
- e) Fiscal reporting will occur on a quarterly basis from the core partners to the ME. The ME will aggregate all fiscal data.

Communications have been good among the core partners, based mainly on regular email, phone and face-to-face interaction throughout Year 1. The same is true of interaction with the N/CRSPs' USAID colleagues in Washington, D.C. (including, several meetings coupled with regular email and phone conversations). As the ME, Tufts worked closely with the AOTR in Washington, D.C. to explore the possibility of Associate Awards with USAID missions around the world. Conversations were held with mission staff in multiple countries; in each case, considerable interest was expressed in identifying substantive areas where the N/CRSP could help mission activity related to operations research and/or capacity-building. Such interactions will be continued, and deepened, during Year 2 with a view to developing Associate Awards, as appropriate.

Open channels were also maintained throughout Year 1 with the other CRSP directors (frequent conference calls, weekly interaction by email, and a directors' collective meeting held in Uganda). This high level of communication has facilitated enhanced understanding of how the Nutrition CRSP should work with Washington and country missions, how it should collaborate with the CRSP Council, and how to get the best level of participation from among the many stakeholders interested in the work of nutrition generally, and the N/CRSP specifically.

The annual meeting of directors in Kampala was attended by senior USAID officials from headquarters, which allowed for intensive discussion on future funding plans and new USAID policies

on evidence-based programming and empirical data collection under the rubric of Feed the Future. A key decision was taken by the CRSP Council that the CRSPs as a group would seek ways to collaborate more fully and identify research priorities where multiple CRSPs can work together rather than independently. As a result, N/CRSP Asia has already had meetings with other CRSP partners in Nepal (national collaborators dealing with Aquafish and Livestock-Climate Change CRSPs).

2.4. Set up a Functional Website and Workspace – Achieved.

One instrument supporting open and regular communication among many partners and stakeholders situated around the globe is the website set up to allow for dedicated web-based work environments, the sharing of key documents, a forum for dialogue on key questions, and dissemination of knowledge generated. The website and workspace was successfully launched, allowing for effective information-sharing. It uses a platform that allows authorized individuals to access an interface that does not require expertise in HTML to post new content, add comments, links, images and documents to the site without assistance from the web designer. The site accommodates growth in content areas and is easily edited to meet changing goals and communications objectives of the research. All CRSP partners and RFA awardees now have access to a secure platform where they can engage with each other, as well as public pages that allows any other stakeholders to contribute to, or benefit from, the work of the N/CRSP.

2.5. Upload Bibliographies – Achieved.

The ME and core partners have been regularly posting to the worksite (for shared attention), a) key readings relevant to the research questions of the N/CRSP, b) literature reviews focused on evidence of if and how agriculture supports improved nutrition globally, and c) data sources relating to Nepal specifically. This activity will be ongoing throughout the life of the N/CRSP.

2.6. Produce dissemination materials – Achieved.

Several kinds of project-related materials were produced in Year 1, including several 2 to 5 page brochures (that were handed out at meetings and posted on the website), as well as materials used by the CRSP Council to highlight the work of the Nutrition CRSP at BIFAD meetings, the CRSP director's retreat in Kampala (July 2011), and in reports to Congress.

2.7 Develop appropriate in-country management structures – Achieved.

At country level (in Nepal), the ME established formal partnerships with several local institutions that have strengths in different domains: namely, Helen Keller International (HKI) in operations and applied research, and the Nepal Technical Advisory Group (NTAG) in field capacity development and community assessments. Office space for the N/CRSP has been secure both at NTAG and in the HKI/Nepal headquarters. The ME covers a share of the salary and benefits of two HKI staff and two NTAG staff who collaborate with, and support, the locally-hired CRSP field director (Diplav Sapkota, MPH) who was hired in August 2011. Local administration of N/CRSP is working smoothly.

2.8 Build partnerships in Nepal with local institutions – Achieved

Further institutional partnerships are also being explored (collaborative as opposed to administrative) with local think tanks, research organizations and academic institutions. For example, the Institute for International Development Studies (IIDS)—an institute with expertise in data management and analysis, as well as survey and research design --plans to offer a new degree program in Environmental Economics and they would like Tufts to be involved in designing and delivering sections on nutrition and public health, and well as advanced research methods. This activity would be contingent on IIDS obtaining academic accreditation from Tribhuvan University, which it has applied for, but awaits a decision. Similarly, good working relations have been established with the Patan Academy of Health Sciences, the Social Science Basu and the Nepal Public Health Foundation.

3. Nepal-Based Research

The operations research supported by USAID through the Nutrition CRSPs was successfully initiated in Asia (Nepal) through the awarding of an initial RFA to a partnership between US and Nepal-based institutions. Primary data collection was delayed as a result of delays in the awarding of USAID/Nepal's Integrated Nutrition Program (INP), which will be the focus of studies of impact, effective roll-out at scale, management, incentives and disincentives for local cross-ministry collaboration and cost-effectiveness.

Defined goals and achievements - Year 1 (research)

3.1 Determine "priority questions...feasibility and sequencing of... required data collection." [p13]	-Achieved
3.2 "Issue, an RFP around research implementation." [p13]	-Achieved
3.3 "Support the generation of empirical data that are useful... to operations on the ground." [p3]	-Achieved
3.4 "Stakeholder meetings planned." [p8]	-Achieved
3.5 "Explore the potential for establishing an in-country TAC" [p3]	-Achieved
3.6 Present "work plan to members of National Planning Commission (NPC)." [p8]	-Achieved
3.7 Identify "(and potentially extend the value) of existing panel surveys" [p4]	-Achieved
3.8 "Several workshops or meetings will take place ...in Year 1" [p8]	-Achieved
3.9 "N/CRSP will initiate a stock-taking of capacity gaps"[p9]	
3.9.1 Stocking review of graduate school curricula re: nutrition	-Not achieved
3.9.2 Stocktaking review of scope for public-private partnerships	-Achieved
3.9.3 Stocktaking review of content of frontline worker training	-Not Achieved
3.9.4 Review of agriculture programs via nutrition lens	-Achieved

3.1. Determine Research Priorities and Data Collection Needs- Achieved

Throughout Year 1, considerable interaction with local stakeholders (at the mission, USAID implementing partners, other agencies, national counterparts, etc.), consultation with researchers

during and since the IFPRI meeting in New Delhi, detailed reviews of the literature, and interaction with other CRSP directors, has supported an understanding of key knowledge gaps relating to agriculture-nutrition interactions in Asia. As a result, the broad questions to be pursued by the Nutrition CRSP have taken shape, and will be fine-tuned at partner meetings in Nepal in November, and in the US in December 2011. The broad lines of research are currently formulated revolve around the following questions:

- i) What is the added-value in achieving nutrition impacts of integrating agriculture into targeted nutrition and public health programs?
- ii) Controlling for maternal height and education, income, etc., do integrated interventions succeed better in preventing or reducing stunting than co-located (separate) interventions?
- iii) Does it matter what 'kind' of agriculture (homestead gardening, irrigated staple grain production, livestock production, export crop marketing, or combinations of these)?
- iv) Does increased farm diversity (in crops or marketed product diversity) axiomatically improve women's or a child's diet diversity (and by what transmission mechanisms)?
- vi) How can enhanced diet diversity be best supported through nutrition interventions to achieve reduced (or prevent) stunting (are these cumulative or separate effects)?
- vii) Is behavior change achieved faster (and/or more sustainably) if messages are narrowly targeted, delivered across multiple platforms (multiply reinforcing), or reinforced across multiple sectors of activity?

In addressing such questions close attention will be paid to costing of process and inputs, management constraints and solutions at each step of program roll-out, best practice in local (district and community level) 'integration' of decisions, program support, and other inter-ministry actions. It is clear that these (and additional ancillary) questions will be best answered by a) establishing panel datasets across multiple sites in Nepal that represent different agro-ecologies and types of programming, and b) identifying critical questions best answered through discrete, free-standing studies. The ME is consulting closely with local implementing partners of USAID programming to determine potential complementarity of CRSP versus program-specific data collection goals.

3.2. Issue RFP for Research Implementation – Achieved.

To initiate the operations research (begin discussions with the mission and its implementing partners on their own information priorities, study design and initiate baseline data collection early in Year 2), the ME developed a Call for Proposals for a Year 1 sub-award. The call was made in early May 2011, announced on the N/CRSP website and communicated through multiple channels in Nepal as well as in the US. The proposals were required to demonstrate capacity to design and conduct rigorous multidisciplinary field research across multiple sites in Nepal, and to promote capacity-building of Nepali institutions in the process. In addition, awards would only be made to partnerships between US academic and Nepal-based institutions. Six complete proposals were received and reviewed (blind) by members of the CRSP global TAG and ME partners, as well as by individual technical specialists invited by the ME for this purpose. One proposal rose to the top of review rankings and the award was committed in July 2011. The ME responded to losing bidders with constructive criticism of their proposals with a view to enhancing local capacity for stronger proposal bids in

future. The Year 1 RFA award was won by Johns Hopkins University (which recused itself from the review process) partnered with NTAG. The award was for US\$300,000.

3.3. Support Generation of Empirical Data Useful to Operations on the Ground- Achieved.

While field-level data collection did not start during this reporting period, the issuance of the Year 1 supported preparation for initiation of primary data collection in the field in Year 2 of the CRSP (as noted in the Implementation Plan for Year 1, which noted that “the baseline work for the planned FTF program would likely not take place until later 2011/early 2012”). Data collection did not start in Year 1 simply because the Integrated Nutrition Program (INP), the focus of the operations research proposed, was only awarded in September 2011. The Year 1 implementation plan noted that “discussion will take place with USAID/Nepal and its implementing partners to agree on which indicators are to be collected at a minimum in relation to the N/CRSP, derive common understanding of operational definitions, and who will have responsibility for collecting what and when (how program-specific M&E systems should dove-tail with research-focused data collection, etc.)” This has been achieved. N/CRSP researchers have been interacting with a range of operational agencies in Nepal to determine the scope for collaboration on research as well as complementary data collection useful to their own M&E.

3.4. Stakeholder meetings planned– Achieved

[this is separate from the Stakeholder Forum].

Three formal meetings were held between the ME and USAID/Nepal staff during Year 1 aimed at sharing and clarifying ideas on research priorities in relation to ongoing and proposed programming supported by the mission. The N/CRSP-Asia established good working relationships in Nepal with a wide range of stakeholders, including government players (including the National Planning Council, the Child Health Division in Ministry of Health, the Institute of Medicine), national institutions, bilateral and multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank, UNICEF, WFP, DFiD, GIZ, etc.), and think tanks and research institutes (such as the Institute for Integrated Development Studies, the Social Science Basu, etc.). Engagement with such partners was essential to gaining a sense of priorities in both research and capacity-building, and in becoming visible in Nepal as a new research partner under USAID’s auspices. Many individual and group meetings have been held with these in-country stakeholders.

3.5 Establish an In-Country Technical Advisory Committee –Achieved.

The plan to establish a Nepal-based Technical Advisory Group (NTAC), to help oversee N/CRSP activity in country and promote stakeholder buy-in was actively pursued in Year 1. USAID Mission and government stakeholders (such as NPC) were consulted in the generation of a draft list of potential members to the NTAC. The formalization of the NTAC and invitations to the group will be the first priority action in Year 2.

3.6. Present work to members of the National Planning Commission –Achieved.

It was originally intended to present the N/CRSP, its objectives, and its plans to a joint session of NPC or at one of the meeting of the Nepal Nutrition Group (NNG) which includes NPC members along with the major actors in Nepal’s nutrition and health policy and planning. Both proved to be impossible to achieve due to changing membership of NPC during early 2011 and shifting dates of NNG meetings. Instead, several individual meetings and briefings have been conducted by N/CRSP staff with NPC members during the course of 2011. This has culminated in NPC offering to host and issue invitations for the N/CRSP’s stakeholder forum planned for November 2011. In addition, N/CRSP staff and core partners have interacted and presented N/CRSP activities and plans to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation (MoAC) and the Child Health Division (CHD) of the Ministry of Health.

3.7. Identify and Extend Value of Panel surveys–Achieved.

As planned, several longitudinal surveys were identified in Year 1. The ME initiated discussion with each of the lead investigators to explore potential for accessing such rich secondary data for analyses that would be supportive of answering N/CRSP research questions and/or building additional primary data collection as new rounds of the panel. The quickest ‘win’ relates to analyses of data collected by Johns Hopkins University at their site in Sarlahi (southern Terai), where research is focused on public health intervention trials. Under N/CRSP auspices, some analyses of existing data have already started which will lead to N/CRSP papers early in 2012. There will be potential (still to be fully determined) of adding CRSP-relevant questions to some up-coming surveys in Sarlahi, allowing for partial panel data to be mined. The ME has also been exploring the potential for designing small interventions to be tested in the Sarlahi ‘living laboratory’ managed by the Johns Hopkins team. This would allow us to leverage the existing capacity of one our core partners at the same time standardizing the data being collected longitudinally adding to USAID’s learning based approach.

A second promising collaboration currently being explored is with Heifer International, an international private voluntary organization engaged in agricultural interventions, as well as behavior change communications around nutrition. Heifer International already has a 5 round survey in the Terai on the role of livestock in enhancing income and diets (2 years of data collected for 3,000 individuals in Nawalparasi district—one of the districts targeted by N/CRSP as a research site). Discussions are on-going on the possibility of adding further rounds of data to the same households.

A third opportunity rests with the University of Michigan’s site near Chitwan (the Chitwan Valley Family Study) which has panel surveys focused on demographics and social change, but also includes data on changing behaviors, household farming practices, family planning histories, and more. The datasets going back to the 1980s are public access; the ME is currently evaluating their value to the CRSP. The ME has engaged with each entity responsible for these studies and is currently exploring potential for a) building further surveys on the existing panels that would allow for answering questions relevant to the N/CRSP, b) engagement in ongoing analysis, and/or c) collaboration in defining upcoming survey rounds by inserting agriculture and nutrition-specific questions for subsequent analysis.

The ME is also discussing potential for building on the prior survey work of entities like Helen Keller International and IIDS.

3.8. Several workshops or meetings will take place-Achieved.

During Year 1, the ME had 2 substantive workshops in Nepal (May and August 2011) with USAID mission and implementing partner participation, as well as 1 technical research methodology workshop in Boston (September 2011) with core partners.

3.9. Stocktaking reviews-Partially Achieved.

To better understand a number of important information gaps in Nepal, several consultant-based reviews were undertaken in Year 1, and two that had been planned were postponed at the request of local stakeholders in UNICEF and WHO (to await findings coming out of their own planned stocktaking exercises addressing similar questions).

3.9.1. Stocking review of graduate school curricula re: nutrition--Not Achieved.

This was started informally through consultation with experts across academia in Nepal, but the ME was asked to wait for a report being prepared for UNICEF on this topic before pursuing the matter deeper. Their report is due in November, so a curriculum review is likely to be part of the Year 2 implementation plan. The Patan Academy of Medical Sciences has also initiated a review of nutrition in MPH and MD curricula that will be of direct relevance to the CRSP's agenda.

3.9.2. Stocktaking review of scope for public-private partnerships—Achieved.

A review of how the food industry (private sector companies) in Nepal approaches nutrition today (and what plans do they have for the coming years), was conducted by a consultant.

3.9.3. Stocktaking review of content of frontline worker training--Not Achieved.

As with the nutrition curriculum review, this topic is being considered by the UNICEF consultants, so it was deemed best to see their report prior to pursuing this question further.

3.9.4. Review of agriculture programs via nutrition lens—Achieved.

A review of how nutrition is currently understood in the context of investments and programming in agriculture was completed.

4. Nepal-Based Capacity-Building

The Year 1 implementation plan identified a number of activities intended to support increased capacities (knowledge, skills, analytical competencies, certification, etc.) relevant to nutrition. That capacity enhancement is needed at national, district and community level (and for institutions as well as individuals) is repeated during all meetings with government, donor and NGO organizations across Nepal. The importance of better linking professional competencies across different disciplines and

ministries was underscored at the IFPRI-hosted conference held in New Delhi in February 2011. The N/CRSP supported travel to, and participation in, that meeting of two Nepal professionals (national partners of the N/CRSP)—one with an agriculture background, the other with a health/nutrition background. They interacted not only with CRSP-supported professionals from Uganda, but also with the many hundreds of other participants interested in the issues that lie at the core of the N/CRSP’s research agenda.

Defined goals and achievements – Year 1 (Capacity-Building)

4.1 Conduct a “Positive Deviance Initiative (PDI) Workshop” [p8]	-Achieved
4.2 “Conduct a research methods workshop” [p9]	-Not achieved
4.3 “Organize a stakeholder forum” [p8]	-Not achieved
4.4 Students “identified for Ras al Khaimah...masters degree.” [p9]	-Achieved
4.5 Students “identified for Bangalore-Boston Nutrition” training [p5]	-Achieved
4.6 Students “identified for “a series of “certificate courses” [p9]	-Not achieved

4.1. Conduct Positive Deviance Workshop – Achieved.

A series of workshops was envisaged for year 1, starting with a training workshop on Positive Deviance research methods. Originally planned for March 2011, that activity took place in September 2011, in Kathmandu, in collaboration with the Positive Deviance Institute at Tufts University, hosted (and locally organized) by NTAG. A 5-day activity, this workshop had more than 2 dozen participants from a wide range of Nepal-based institutions. The feedback was very positive: one comment by one World Bank participant was that *“the PD workshop was so enlightening, I wish I had taken this session two decades earlier so that it could have helped much more in making a difference to our rural communities in health programs.”*

4.2. Conduct a research methods workshop – Not Achieved.

Additional skills-workshops were planned for Year 1, including advanced research methods in nutrition, and potentially on analytic methods for nutrition and dietary data, etc. These did not take place in Year 1 due to a shortage of time available for appropriate planning, and due to the shifting timing of other events (most notably the stakeholder forum—see section 3.3 below). Thus, the goal in Year 2 will be to define an agreed strategy (with the Nepal government and other partners) for prioritizing in-country training and workshops that can be supported by N/CRSP. While there are many capacity gaps in many areas, N/CRSP must focus on skills, capabilities and audiences where impact will be greatest, immediate, and most supportive of N/CRSP goals. As such, Year 2 will see more targeted capacity-building activities than Year 1.

4.3. Organize a stakeholder forum - Not Achieved.

During Year 1, plans were elaborated for a multi-stakeholder forum that was initially planned for March 2011. The plans were postponed due to sudden changes in the membership of the National Planning Commission at the time of reconfigurations of the Nepalese government. This meant that

time was too short to meet individually with NPC members and other policymakers in key ministries in time to coordinate a multi-ministry meeting. It was decided to aim for late summer, yet despite considerable energy and time invested by the ME and its local counterparts to consult with the key interlocutors on appropriate dates it was not possible to secure a forum time before the end of FY2010/2011.

That said, firm dates have now been set for the forum to take place in late November 2011. The meeting will be formally 'hosted' by the National Planning Commission (who are sending out invitations), and will include institutions involved in agriculture, nutrition and health in Nepal. Non-governmental stakeholders will include representatives from implementing agencies and donor partners as well as universities and other research groups. The focus will be on discussing priorities for research and capacity building around integrating programming in agriculture and nutrition.

4.4. Students "identified for Ras al Khaimah...masters degree– Achieved.

Several promising professionals seeking to obtain graduate level education were identified by widely discussing the potential with collaborators in country and asking them to suggest names of viable candidates. Those who formally applied to the Tufts' RAK masters' degree in Nutrition Science and Policy were scrutinized by the program's Admissions Committee following established norms, and two individuals were accepted into the program. They started during 2011, attended the first 'residency period' required by this hybrid degree program (in the United Arab Emirates), and have proven themselves to be excellent students and they are gaining a great deal of knowledge and skills that they continue to apply in their daily professional life (since they do not have to leave their current jobs to engage in this degree program).

4.5. Students "identified for Bangalore-Boston Nutrition Course"— Achieved.

A larger number of Nepali professionals (currently working in either the public sector or civil society organizations) were identified as candidates for 'out of country' training. A wide number of institutions in Nepal were asked to propose candidates to apply for the 2-week intensive training in advanced nutrition research methods, held in India each January. A total of five Nepalis were selected for the January 2012 session—the cost of their tuition and travel is covered by the N/CRSP. Two of these are from the National Planning Commission, one from the Ministry of Health, and two from the Nepal Public Health Foundation.

4.6 Students "identified for "a series of "certificate courses– Not achieved.

It was anticipated that it would be possible to recruit several Nepali professionals to participate in on-line training in areas appropriate to CRSP goals (such as Monitoring and Evaluation of Nutrition Programs, Nutrition Communications for Health Professionals, and Program Design and Management Issues).

5. Financial and Budget Issues

The ME has worked closely with its core partners to establish sub-contracts and scopes of work for Year 1, allowing for disbursement of funds to enable their activities to begin. While in some cases the final agreements and disbursements were delayed until the last quarter of FY 2010/2011, because they depended on final approval of the Year 1 budget which was only achieved in June 2011, the partners have shown serious engagement with the N/CRSP and commitment to its overall research and capacity-building agendas. With the approval of a carry-over of funds unspent in Year 1, Tufts and its partners will be able to pursue the activities defined as priorities into Year 2 with no break in process or funding pipeline. The Project Directors have requested USAID AO and AOTR for both Nutrition CRSPs to give consideration and approve an exception to the maximum length of forward funding per ADS 602.3.3. The burn rate of Year 1 is not indicative of the burn rate expected over the next year because of the delay in expenditure of funds while the Nutrition CRSPs (Uganda and Nepal) aligned with the Mission's integrated agriculture and health programs.

6. Overall Progress towards FTF Indicators

Discussion continues with USAID/DC and USAID/Nepal on issues in data collection with respect to attribution (of research and training impacts), responsibility for impact (in relation to indicators of productivity gain or enhancement over which research activities have no direct control), and potential for double-counting (where USAID implementing partners and the NCRSP are likely to collect identical data). For Year 1, a set of 32 indicators was compiled for which FY2011 targets were set and progress can be measured—some of these are specific to the N/CRSP's activities while others relate more generally to FTF programming (results framework) goals. As laid out in Appendix 1, of the 8 N/CRSP specific indicators, targets were met in relation to 6 indicators. Targets were not established for Year 1 in relation to the other FTF indicators since no programming (or data collection) had commenced and hence no outcomes could be reasonably anticipated.

For the N/CRSP-specific indicators, 3 host country institutions had various aspects of their capacity enhanced in relation to nutrition research (NTAG, the local office of HKI and IIDS). Indeed, the two dozen participants of the first N/CRSP-supported workshop and the numerous Nepali applicants for the Year 1 RFA (who obtained feedback from the ME as well as in-person interaction subsequent to the award) all had their capabilities for grant writing or research methods enhanced during FY2011. No consumption or nutrition surveys had been planned for Year 1, and none were undertaken. However, two gap analyses were undertaken (out of 3 planned); one in collaboration with HKI (on nutrition-sensitive actions in agriculture in Nepal) and the other through a local consultant (on private sector interests in nutrition in Nepal).

No short or long-term training in agriculture or food security issues had been planned, so none were put into practice, although this may be a focus area for the Year 2 workplan. In terms of (formal) training in nutrition, however, it was planned to identify 6 Nepalese students for intensive (two week) education; this was achieved and all 6 will be enrolled for the Bangalore-based advanced training for January 2012. Institutions in Nepal receiving enhanced capacity in operations research were NTAG and HKI (as per above).

Finally, one ‘integrated research study’ was planned to be initiated, which it was—a draft of an overview analysis of knowledge and research gaps where agriculture, food security and nutrition are linked in Nepal was pursued by Purdue. Additional analyses of existing data have been initiated by JHU and Harvard, and all of these are expected to result in presentations at scientific meetings in Year 2 as well as formal working papers leading to journal publications.

7. Project Performance Narrative - Summary

The launch of N/CRSP-Asia has been smooth, both at a global level, where scientific and operational agency receptivity to the idea of a CRSP focused on the role of agriculture in promoting nutrition has been very strong, and in the focus country of Nepal. A large network of collaborators has been established globally and locally, and the core partner team has established highly productive and collegial working relations. Within Nepal, interactions with senior officials in government have been highly productive, as well as with other major stakeholders involved in both operations and research.

The main challenges facing N/CRSP-Asia as it got off the ground in Year 1 were three-fold. First, this is a very new model for CRSP-funded activity; that is, new indicators of impact had to be identified and agreed, new ways of recruiting and channeling research funds had to be formalized (few large grants supporting large-scale data collection rather than many small, often unrelated, grants), new approaches were needed to secure collaboration with USAID implementing partners rather than with crop researchers or soil scientists. This involved a steep learning curve. Second, the main integrated program supported by USAID/Nepal was not awarded to implementing partners until the very end of the Year 1 period, which constrained the ME’s ability to discuss details plans with either the mission or potential awardees. That cause major delays for the core partners’ ability to refine research questions and design and fine-tune plans for data collection. Third, continuous (and ongoing) turnover in government personnel constrained the ME’s ability to organize a multi-stakeholder forum to discuss Nepal-specific research priorities, and the setting up of a Nepal-based technical advisory group. Nevertheless, both of these have been planned for the first months of Year 2 of the program.

8. N/CRSP-Asia Story

(Patrick Webb, Tufts University, Patrick.webb@tufts.edu)

Enhancing the training of frontline nutrition workers in Nepal

Nepal is a top 10 country for prevalence of stunting--almost 50% in 2008, compared with Asia's average of 30%. Roughly half a million children are wasted, with 100,000 in the severe category—more than in Afghanistan. Undernutrition among adult women is higher than in Niger or the Democratic Republic of Congo. Identified as a priority country by the *Feed the Future* initiative, Nepal is home to around 6 million food insecure people. Overcoming constraints to agricultural productivity is an urgent need, as is tackling malnutrition.

The national government has made both top policy priorities. However, Nepal is constrained in its ability to act: there are knowledge gaps of what works best in the special geographic and environmental contexts of Nepal, and there are serious limitations in human and institutional capacity to apply what *is* known. This is where the Nutrition CRSP steps in. Its goal is to support field research that can fill knowledge gaps on how to effectively integrate agriculture, nutrition and health—what programs work well, how are they best implemented, what do they cost relative to alternatives? Close collaboration with Nepali research institutions helps build local capabilities for advanced policy-relevant research.

However, sound empirical research that does not leave the laboratory is usually irrelevant research. An equally important goal of the Nutrition CRSP is to build human and institutional capacity for the translation of knowledge into practice. It has initiated reviews of academic curricula relevant to nutrition, the relevance of Nepal-based degree programs, and the practicality of trainings for frontline workers in health and nutrition. It is interacting closely with medical colleges, agriculture schools, and other universities to help enhance what is taught and how, in relation to nutrition specifically, but also in relation to the intersection of disciplines relevant to integrated programs (that link agriculture *and* nutrition). This includes approaches used to train village health volunteers, agriculture extension agents and other community-level workers.

At a village meeting of local ministry staff in the western mountains, two important things were discovered: on the one hand, many village workers are functionally illiterate, and yet their years of practical learning and experience of implementing programs has made such women invaluable to the communities in which they work. Yet even they recognize that their knowledge of nutrition problems and solutions is practically zero. They are thirsty for appropriate training and curricula that would help them achieve measurable impacts in nutrition. On the other hand, the agriculture officials and health officials almost never interact despite recognizing that both have much to offer in the fight for improved nutrition.

Pull-out Quote: *“This is the first time our agriculture and health officials have met to discuss nutrition, and there is so much overlap in ideas and interests. We need better incentives to work together, and new information on what programs work best to link our areas of responsibility!”*

From a meeting of Village Health Workers and Agriculture Extension Agents in Dolpa district, Nepal.

In its first year of activity, the Nutrition CRSP has initiated the research and capacity building that are in high demand in Nepal and have huge a potential to make huge and lasting impacts on how programs are designed, how ministries chose to collaborate, and on the nutritional status of women and children in both in Nepal and across Asia.



Photocredit: Patrick Webb, Tufts University

Village Health Volunteer in the Mountains of Nepal – mixing wisdom with new ideas.

Appendices

A1. Nutrition CRSP - Asia Leadership 2010-2011

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A2 : Table 1 - Activities and Outputs, N/CRSP-Asia Year 1

Theme (a): Scientific Research				
Outcomes	Results Framework #	Output Indicators	FY 2011 Targets	FY 2011 Actuals
Outcome 1: Improved host country nutrition and food security monitoring, analytics and surveillance capacities	N/CRSP	1. Number of U.S. and host country institutions that have gained enhanced capacity in nutrition research, monitoring and surveillance methodologies, nutrition information systems, and/or nutrition interventions with USG assistance	3	3
	N/CRSP	2. Number of food consumption and/or nutrition surveys undertaken, or reported on and disseminated	0	0
	N/CRSP	3. Number of U.S. or host country institutions or individuals having completed a nutrition assessment, survey or gap analysis.	3	3
Theme (b): Human and Institutional Capacity Development				
Outcomes	Results Framework #	Output Indicators	FY 2011 Targets	FY 2011 Actuals
Outcome 2: Improved host country academic, technical and research capacity in nutrition, health and agriculture	1.1	4. Number of individuals (disaggregate) who have received short term agricultural sector productivity or food security training	0	0
	1.1	5. Number of individuals (disaggregate) who have received long term agricultural sector productivity or food security training	0	0
	8	6. Number of people trained in child health and nutrition (nutrition science, dietetics, public health nutrition) through USG-supported programs (longer-term) a) identified, b) trained	a) 6 b) 0	a) 8 b) 0
	N/CRSP	7. Number of U.S. and host country institutions with enhanced capacity to assess, plan, design, implement, monitor and/or evaluate nutrition programs, policies and practices	1	1
	N/CRSP	8. Number of U.S. and host country institutions and individuals who have gained enhanced capacity in clinical, operational, agricultural, translational and/or public health nutrition research aimed at the reduction of malnutrition with USG assistance	2	2
	N/CRSP	9. Number of peer-reviewed journal articles co-authored with host country institutions and others in country with USG assistance (submitted or published)	0	0
	N/CRSP	10. Number of brief articles and presentations co-authored with host country institutions and others in country with USG assistance	2	1 (see deviation narrative #1)

Theme (c): Improving the Nutritional Status of Women and Children Through Agriculture and Food Based Programs				
Outcomes	Results Framework #	Output Indicators	FY 2011 Targets	FY 2011 Actuals
Outcome 3: Improvement in the nutritional status of women and children	G	11. Prevalence of underweight children (weight/age)	DHS 2011	TBD
	N	12. Prevalence of stunted children (height/age)	DHA 2011	TBD
	N	13. Prevalence of wasted children (weight/height)	DHS 2011	TBD
	N	14. Prevalence of underweight women (BMI < 18.5)	DHS 2011	TBD
	8	15. Number of children reached by USG-supported nutrition programs	TBD	TBD
	5	16. Prevalence of households with moderate or severe hunger	TBD	TBD
	6	17. Mean number of food groups consumed by women of reproductive age (Women's Dietary Diversity)	DHS 2011	TBD
	6	18. Prevalence of children 6-23 months receiving a minimum acceptable diet	TBD	TBD
	7	19. Prevalence of exclusive breast feeding of infants under six months	DHS 2011	TBD
	8	20. Prevalence of anemia among women of reproductive age	DHS 2011	TBD
	8	21. Prevalence of anemia among children 6-59 months	DHS 2011	TBD
	A	22. Gender Perception Index (pending)	TBD	TBD
Outcome 4: Improved agricultural productivity	1.2	23. Number of farmers and others who have applied new technologies or management practices as a results of USG assistance	0	0
	1.5	24. Number of private enterprises, producers organizations, water users associations, trade and business associations and community based organizations (CBOs) that applied new technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance	0	0
	1.5	25. Number of private enterprises, producer organizations, water users associations, trade and business associations and community based organizations receiving USG assistance	0	0
	2.5	26. Number of rural hectares formalized	0	0
Outcome 5: Increased household agricultural incomes	A	27. Per capita expenditure of rural households (proxy for income) of USG targeted beneficiaries	TBD	TBD
	4	28. Number of jobs attributed to FtF implementation	0	0
	2	29. Value of incremental sales (collected at farm level) attributed to FtF implementation	0	TBD
	3	30. Value of new private sector investment in the agriculture sector or food chain leveraged	0	TBD

		by FtF implementation		
	3	31. Number of public-private partnerships formed as a result of FtF activities	0	TBD
Outcome 6: Enhanced research to practice continuum	N/CRSP	32. Number of integrated research studies linked to mission programs aimed at the reduction of malnutrition conducted with USG assistance (a) initiated, or b) completed	a) 1 b) 0	a) 1 b) 0

Table 2: Additional activities and Outputs, Year 1 (program governance and management)

Theme	Activity	Output/Deliverable	Date Planned	Date Achieved
Governance and Management				
	Governance structures put in place	Board of Directors and Technical Advisory Committee put in place	Dec 2010	Dec 2010
	Governance oversight of CRSP process	1st meetings of BOD and TAC	Jan 2011	Jan 2011
	Governance oversight of CRSP process	2nd meeting of BOD and TAC	Mar 2011/Sept 11	Mar 2011
	Management structure with core partners finalized	Contracts and scopes of work finalized	Apr 2011	Apr 2011
	In-country management structures finalized	Set up of in-country management structures	Apr/May 2011	Aug 2011
	Communications	Website; communications strategy defined	June 2011	June 2011
	In-Country governance (Nepal TAC)	N-TAC members identified, first meeting held	Sept 2011	Planned for Nov 2011 (see deviation narrative 2)

Deviation Narratives

1. Only one presentation was made in Nepal (presented by the ME in collaboration with its local partner, NTAG). It was expected that several review papers or presentations on empirical data would have been possible, but this was not the case due to the delayed awarding of the USAID/Nepal Integrated Nutrition Program.
2. The local technical advisory committee (N-TAC), and the stakeholder forum, were both planned for Year 1, but high turnover in government led to delays in scheduling the forum (planned for November 2011), and establishment of the local TAC.

A3. – List of Attached Reports

1. Policies and Procedures Manual
2. Complied minutes of the N/CRSP global BOD and TAC meetings, Year 1.
3. Draft working paper from Purdue University—literature review relating to knowledge gaps at the intersection of agriculture, health and nutrition.
4. Stocktaking report from local consultant – review of agriculture interventions in Nepal (recent or ongoing) with explicit or implicit nutrition goals.
5. Stocktaking report from local consultant – interviews with private sector entities in Nepal involved in the processed, manufacturing or retail of nutritionally-enhanced food products
6. DAI fieldtrip report to Nepal.