



IN FOCUS

AGRICULTURE



Trip Expands Knowledge and Raises Interest in the Agriculture Development Issues of Nepal

“It was striking to see farmers, particularly the impoverished ones, realize the potential of their land and be able to reap its benefits fully, so much so that after years of migrating to India for seasonal jobs, they have now chosen to stay back in their villages to pursue agriculture as a vocation,” shared Upendra Lamichhane, a journalist working for a popular Nepali newspaper *Nagarik*. “I feel fortunate for having had the opportunity to share their joys first-hand, and for being able to tell their stories.” Lamichhane, along with five other journalists, three officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), and USAID staff, recently visited the mid-and-far western districts to observe some of the ongoing USAID agriculture development efforts in Nepal.

The trip was designed to broaden their understanding of these development efforts and their impacts while also raising the issues, challenges, and priorities related to addressing Nepal’s food security, nutrition, and economic growth concerns through long-term agriculture development. Over the last few months, Nepal witnessed many discussions related to agriculture in the media – both mainstream print and blog – that raised some very good issues, including the use and promotion of

hybrid seeds. The dialogues also engaged, and called for answers and actions from the private sector and public institutions such as USAID, MOAC, and National Agriculture Research Council.

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The team observed key USAID initiatives that foster economic growth, improve food security, and increase the competitiveness of the commercial agricultural sector. The government officials, traveling with the journalists, acknowledged how the projects have been a life-changing experience for many people living in and around the project areas, and that there were ample of best practices that can and should be roped in and replicated for nation-wide programming by the government.

Upon their return, the team shared their experiences with the U.S. Embassy, USAID, and implementing partner staff during a debriefing session. Speaking with journalists

during the session, U.S. Ambassador Scott H. DeLisi welcomed the increasing level of attention that ‘agriculture development’ is getting in Nepal. He further stated that the U.S. Government is keen to work with all concerned, including the Government of Nepal on this issue. USAID/Nepal Mission Director, David C. Atteberry, further stressed on the need for USAID to adopt a holistic approach that engages stakeholders from all levels. He added the importance of getting feedback directly from these stakeholders so that the program impacts last long beyond the life of any one project.

Standing amidst farmers in a field surrounded by acres and acres of high-value green vegetables, Kashish Das Shrestha, a Nepali journalist based in New York and one of the media officials on the trip commented, “The success of the program as defined in its objectives and time line is undeniable and over all the farmers seem quite hopeful about the yields they have been producing and the potential it holds to transform their lives.”

Stories published by the journalist upon their return are available on [USAID/Nepal’s website](#). Read the full story [here](#).



Snapshot: Agriculture in Nepal

- GDPA and GDP growth rates of 3.3% and 3.4% (2000/07)
- Economic dependence and prevalence on subsistence agriculture
 - Agriculture contribution to GDP: 34% (2008/9)
 - Employment: Nearly 70% of total workforce
- Cereal production growth rate : 1.7%
- Low yields for major cereals: Paddy: 2,700kg/hectare; Wheat: 2,150kg/hectare; Maize: 2,100/kg/hectare
- Food availability: adequate; access and utilization: poor
- High-value vegetable sector growth rate: 7% per annum

“Quote of the Month”

“I assure you that we’ll be on the same train together and we’ll be on the same page together because we aren’t here to work against you or in spite of you. We’re here to complement what you’re doing. We need to work together and we will, and it has to be based on the Nepali ownership.”

Andrea Wojnar-Diagne, the newly appointed Peace Corps Country Director for Nepal in an interview with *The Week*, January 18, 2012 (Republica). Read the [full interview](#) here.

NEWS IN BRIEF

January 2012

Other Highlights

US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues Learns More about Trafficking in Persons Issue in Nepal:

On January 7, Ambassador Melanne Verveer, visited *Pourakhi*, a local NGO that promotes the rights of returned women migrant workers. USAID has supported *Pourakhi* since 2010 through the [Combating Trafficking in Persons \(CTIP\) program](#). During her visit, Ambassador Verveer spoke with three Gulf country returnees in order to understand the plight of female migrant workers. The women, who were initially lured by the promise of substantial pay, traveled to the Gulf as labor migrants but were deprived of their salary and severely tortured by their employers. Ambassador Verveer commented that the meeting confirmed the challenges of female migrant workers and expressed her commitment to anti-trafficking. Through CTIP, USAID is working to strengthen the capacity of the government and NGOs to reduce trafficking in persons through trafficking prevention, victim protection, and traffickers’ prosecution. Starting last year, CTIP increases USAID’s focus on improving law enforcement and the judiciary’s capacity to prosecute traffickers, as well as build on the successes of previous programs.

Peace Corps Return Celebrated with Much Fan Fare: Following on the [official launch](#) of Peace Corps Nepal in Washington DC on January 10, Nepal formally welcomed Peace Corps back on January 17, ending a seven-year absence. Two events commemorated the auspicious return of the Peace Corps. The first event took place at Singha Durbar at the Prime Minister’s office with a warm welcome provided by the Prime Minister and other senior Government officials. Prime Minister Bhattarai remarked, “I am very pleased with the return of the Peace Corps to Nepal. From the early 60s, thousands of volunteers have served in districts all across this country. I remember in much of the 60s and 70s the volunteers were a big source of teachers for subjects like math and science. I am very glad that with USAID’s assistance, the volunteers are coming back one more time to help with agriculture and health. Those are areas that need help, and I welcome the decision to redeploy the Peace Corps.” This was followed by a special program hosted by U.S. Ambassador Scott H. DeLisi. The Peace Corps and the work of its Volunteers are fondly talked about and remembered throughout Nepal. Its return was in large part due to the persistent voice of support and efforts from key Government of Nepal counterparts, primarily the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Talk by the U.S. Ambassador Generates Public Interest Regarding the Economy: On January 26, USAID/Nepal, in partnership with Entrepreneurs for Nepal and Samridhhi, the Prosperity Foundation, co-hosted a talk about the Role of International Development in Economic Growth for Nepal. Speaking to a group of almost 300 entrepreneurs, youth, media, private sector, Government of Nepal, and other stakeholders, the U.S. Ambassador Scott H. DeLisi delivered a powerful talk outlining the way forward to achieving robust economic growth, and the role of development efforts and the country’s citizens therein. With the fluidity of Nepal’s political situation and the pending peace and constitution drafting process, the country, at large, has seen very little focus and momentum on the economic growth agenda at the national level. The speech, received wide attention over the media, particularly social media, generating considerable attention regarding the economy. Read the [full speech](#) here.



Launch of the Mission Director's Outreach Roundtable Discussion Series: On January 27, USAID/Nepal launched the Outreach Roundtable Discussion Series with the Mission Director. This is a setting where a small group of Nepali people, representing different sectors, are invited to discuss with the Mission Director the various issues affecting and impacting Nepal. The first session of the series started with an interaction with upcoming Nepali leaders representing a broad range of work and interests, from social activists to entrepreneurs to development workers. These roundtables are informal outreach discussion sessions, designed for USAID to engage with, network, and learn from the people whose voice is important but whom we don't meet as often as we would have liked. These sessions will be organized every three weeks with different audiences on a wide-array of topics.

FROM THE MISSION DIRECTOR'S DESK
David C. Atteberry, Mission Director, USAID/Nepal

Celebrating the Return of Peace Corps to Nepal

Over the past few years, whichever remote corner of this country one might travel to, whether Bajura in the upper Far West or Janakpur down in the Terai, you would inevitably hear the mention of Peace Corps Volunteers and their remarkable work, followed by the question, "When will Peace Corps come back?" I am, therefore, absolutely delighted to see the return of Peace Corps during my tenure as the USAID Mission Director in Nepal.



Earlier this week, we welcomed Peace Corps back with two very special events in Kathmandu. I had the pleasure of speaking in both the events, and wanted to share with you some of my thoughts on their return, underlined by why I think it is such a momentous occasion for all of us.

Peace Corps is returning just at the end of the 60th anniversary year of the development partnership between the United States and Nepal. This is a partnership marked by important development progress and good will achieved through the joint efforts of both nations. I truly believe that the good will between our nations is due in part to the extremely successful history of Peace Corps programs in Nepal who had been here for more than 40 years since Peace Corps inception in 1962. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) of Nepal from every decade hold a very special place in their hearts and minds for Nepal and I know that for their

host communities, the feeling has been mutual. Whether through promoting livelihoods, setting up libraries, constructing schools, or teaching families about health and family planning, Peace Corps Volunteers became ingrained in Nepal's development fabric, while their Nepali counterparts, colleagues and friends welcomed them with open arms.

For me their return is extra special. I myself am an RPCV. After graduating from Texas A & M University in 1978, I went straight into the Peace Corps as a volunteer in the Central African Republic. My job was in fisheries development, teaching families to set up fish ponds in their backyards in an effort to raise their incomes. What I felt and experienced on seeing the impact of my "small" help had on my host community was truly phenomenal.

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I realized early on that I wanted to continue my life helping those less fortunate than me as a development worker. It was in Peace Corps that I found my calling when I first learned about USAID and the wonderful work it does of extending a helping hand to people struggling to make a better life. The USAID bug bit me during my volunteer time at Peace Corps, and what an infectious bug it has proven to be. More than 30 years down the road, I am still a USAID worker. And absolutely proud and happy to have lived my life in the service of my nation helping impoverished people rise out of their poverty in some of the poorest places in the world.

In fact, my very first job with USAID in Zaire was as an advisor in the Ministry of Agriculture working with Peace Corps. USAID was essentially funding the Peace Corps program where I was an extension worker embedded within the host country government



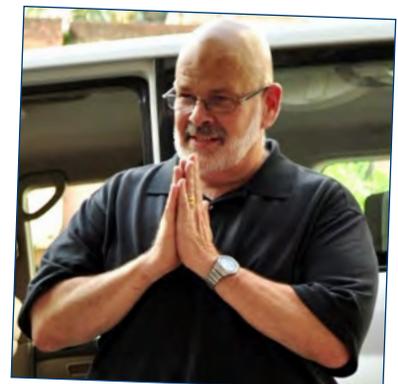
Upcoming Events in February:

- Inauguration of the Parliament Secretariat's Media Center (February 3)
- Country Development Cooperation Strategy Retreat (February 7 to 8)
- Field Trip by visiting officials from USAID/ Washington to observe program sites in the eastern/central Terai region (February 10 to 14)
- Mission Director's Outreach Roundtable Discussion Series with the Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Commission (February 17)

to help increase the productivity and incomes of the rural poor through fishery and agriculture.

As I reflect back, I remember just how effective that development model was. By working with the host country government, thanks to a USAID-funded Peace Corps program, we were ensuring close coordination and collaboration with the government to directly strengthen their systems and services. Not only did that allow for wider ownership of the program, but also gave our efforts a better chance of being sustained and replicated. Of course, in the process we were ensuring strong collaboration between the different U.S. Government development vehicles – USAID and Peace Corps. I am, therefore, excited that we are emulating that model here with USAID partially funding the Peace Corps program, which will work alongside USAID in the areas of agriculture and nutrition. I am confident there will be many significant impacts from the partnership as well as lessons learned for the rest of our programs to follow suit.

I will be happy to share with you an update on the progress of our Volunteers once the Peace Corps program hits the ground, so I hope you continue to look out for my **bi-weekly blogs**.



Young Farmers Choose and Benefit from Agriculture as a Vocation

In many developing countries like Nepal, young workers don't perceive agriculture, Nepal's main industry, as a viable economic option. Too often young Nepalis from rural communities cross the border to India to work as day laborers in difficult conditions for little pay. This trend could be changing thanks to programs like USAID's **Nepal Flood Recovery Program** (USAID-NFRP), which is working with rural farmers to move them away from subsistence farming to more profitable and sustainable commercial agriculture.

Under the commercial agriculture component of USAID-NFRP, participating farmers receive training in crop selection, nursery management, and transplanting, as well as in production techniques. Of the 7,578 farmers supported since the beginning of the program, more than 25 percent are under the age of 30. These young farmers represent the future of the agriculture sector in Nepal.

Muliya Rana from Birsana VDC of Kailali district primarily grew low-value cereals and potatoes prior to working with USAID-NFRP.

Now she produces high-value vegetables such as chilli, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, and tomato on 0.73 hectares of land. After the first crop cycle, Rana earned more than \$3,000 in income. She hopes to earn an additional \$3,000 in the next crop cycle.

SUCCESS STORY



Muliya Rana with her husband

Rana's plot is one of the best in the area and she is now serving as a model for other farmers. Seven farmer groups from surrounding VDCs, and various district government officials, have visited to observe and learn from her nursery and farm.

"Vegetable farming is a better source of income than other food grain crops. I am satisfied to see the healthy vegetable crops in my field and I am confident in getting good returns in total," Rana said. The Birsana farmers, inspired by their early success, are ready to invest even more into their farms. The group approached USAID's program for additional seed varieties and expressed interest in further extending their growing plots. Their success is not going unrecognized. At a recent Federation of Nepalese Chamber and Commerce Industries (FNCCI)-sponsored regional agricultural fair in Dhangadhi district, the **program's beneficiaries** took first prize in 11 out of 12 categories of a vegetable competition.

The transformational increase in incomes experienced by these young farmers is not only life-changing, but is also inspiring, empowering them with the knowledge and skills they need to cultivate sustainable commercial farms and contribute to the overall food security of their country.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Uttarganga VDC is five kilometers away from Birendranagar municipality overlooking the picturesque Surkhet valley. Jaypur, Ishworidanda, and Daulatpur are three adjoining villages of Uttarganga where the majority of villagers are Dalit, a traditionally excluded group of Nepal. Life was particularly harsh for these villagers due to dry, uncultivated land and an acute shortage of drinking water. But, with the contribution of **USAID/Nepal's Education for Income Generation (EIG)** program to the installation of Multiple Water User System (MUS) - designed to have dual utility of drinking water and micro-irrigation- things changed drastically for the dwellers of Jaypur.

EIG's additional agricultural training to the local farmers has enhanced their capacity to grow off-season vegetables, which they sell to nearby market at Birendranagar at a higher and more profitable price. After the positive impact of MUS in Jaypur, the same technology has been replicated in Ishworidanda and Daulatpur with support from EIG. Furthermore, the project is a stellar example of a public private partnership. Institutions like VDC, DADO, DDC, EIG, local communities, MCIC Grant programs, Dalit Sewa Sangh, etc. have all come together to build MUS and plastic tunnels.

A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY



The Integrated Cereal Project (ICP)

(1970s to 1980s) assisted in setting up seed cleaners, such as this one at Rampur. USAID sponsored agricultural research in order to produce high yielding food grains like rice, maize, and wheat. ICP tested these high yielding food grains with local cropping strategies so that farmers gained practical and functional improvements. Agricultural development and research continues to be an integral part of USAID's strategy for addressing poverty and improving economic growth. In 2010, USAID leveraged funding with the Swiss Government to support a **program** enhancing maize production and seed quality to improve household food security in 20 remote hill districts throughout Nepal.