

**MID TERM EVALUATION REPORT
ON**

ENHANCING LIVELIHOOD THROUGH LOCAL EFFORTS PROJECT



SUBMITTED TO:

Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS) Nepal

SUBMITTED BY:

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ENHANCING LIVELIHOOD THROUGH LOCAL EFFORTS PROJECT

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Enhancing livelihood through local efforts project (ELLEP) is an integrated project that aims at sustainable development in all the aspects (internal and external) of the focus community. The objective of ELLEP is to support 'sustainable livelihood' of marginalized groups of the society through food security transformation and to lobby for equal access to/by all, so that the focus groups become capable of participating in political, economic and social spheres. This project is divided into two phases. Phase I starts from 2009 till 2012, and Phase II starts from 2013 and end by 2016. The major components of the project are: (1) Food Security, (2) Income generation (3) health and sanitation, (4) Education (5) Institutional Development and (6) Network Development of Community Based Organisations. The thematic areas covered by the project included: livelihood improvement: food security; income generation activities; institutional development; small infrastructure development (renovation/new construction of irrigations systems; drinking water scheme and micro-hydro-power scheme; health, and sanitation; hygiene and nutritional education; and advocacy activities such as capacity enhancement, lobbying from addressing the communities pertinent issues/agenda (human rights, food sovereignty, and support for communities' strategic planning and documentation campaigns.

SAHAS Nepal followed an integrated approach to implement this project, with a start from the mobilization of focus groups and with gradual organizational development and registration as a network organisation of CBOs at the end of the project phase I. This local network organisation will finally take over the responsibility for the development activities in the community.

1.2 Rationale of the Midterm Evaluation

A mid-term evaluation to be conducted after the completion of about two project years and six months was also envisaged in the project document, and that the result of the evaluation should be shared with the donor agency and would be taken as guidance for other development activities of SAHAS-Nepal. It is also that the successful activities might be replicated during the second phase of the project. Therefore, this mid-term evaluation was undertaken to assess the project design, achievements, efforts and impacts, and to provide recommendations for possible revision, design and implementation for the second phase of the project.

2. Midterm Evaluation of the Project

2.1 Study Objectives and Scope

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the study envisaged that the focus of evaluation would be on efficiency and effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and gender perspective. As set forth by the TOR (Annex II), the following are the focus of the mid-term evaluation.

- The present status of the project
- The implementation process of the project, and
- Propose recommendations for completing the remaining activities of Phase I and upcoming Phase II.

Even though the ELLEP covers a total of 16 VDCs of four districts, namely, Udaypur, Dhading, Gorakha and Tanahu, this evaluation report is based on the information related to three districts only, i.e., Dhading, Gorakha and Tanahu.

2.2 Mid-Term Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation has been undertaken in line with the terms of reference prepared for the assignment, and the framework of the Action Programme. It is obvious the quality of the study, in terms of validity and reliability, would have been further enhanced, had it covered more number of VDCs, schools and the project beneficiaries. However, the evaluator believes the study has not been affected in any manner.

2.3 Approach

The MTE study adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches to review the overall performance of the project. Most of the quantitative information was obtained from the project related documents provided SAHAS-Nepal. Enquiries were carried out based on the 'checklists' prepared for the purpose of focus group discussions (FGDs) with the target groups in their villages.

The duration available for the field visit was five days, including the travel days. The methodological procedures employed for undertaking this assignment basically comprised of three aspects: (i) Pre-fieldwork (Review of the project related documents and consultation) (ii) Field reconnaissance which include (a) FGD with the project beneficiaries, (b) On-spot observation of

selected home gardens in the project districts and (iii) Consultation with the SAHAS-Nepal personnel working in Kathmandu and project districts, and project's partner organizations.

2.3.1 Pre-fieldwork consultation

Prior to going to the selected project districts (Dhading, Gorakha, and Tanahu) for the field study, the basic preparation was done by reviewing the documents related to the project, and in consultation with the concerned personnel of SAHAS-Nepal in Kathmandu. The review of the documents provided with an opportunity to understand the project context, in which it was implemented.

2.3.2 Desk study

The desk study involved review of the project documents such as project proposal, progress reports, documentation of case studies, etc. It must be mentioned here that the MTE did not repeat the investigation of the matters on which the secondary information are already available. However, the team verified some of the findings during their field visits with different stakeholders including direct beneficiaries. The desk study involved the collection and review of the project related documents obtained from SAHAS-Nepal and other relevant published materials as sources of information for the preparation of this report.

2.3.3 Field Reconnaissance

The field reconnaissance for the External Review included (i) FGD with the project beneficiaries; (ii) On-field observation of the project activities and interaction with individual project beneficiaries; (iii) Consultation with the SAHAS personnel working in the project districts.

2.3.3.1 FGD with the project beneficiaries

FGDs were conducted with the target beneficiaries of the project in all the three project districts, i.e., Dhading, Gorakha and Tanahu.. During the field visits, open discussions were conducted with the project target groups/beneficiaries in order to collect additional relevant information in line with the MTE objectives. At the end of discussion with each group, the conclusions (results) of the discussions were also presented to them in order to confirm that the information gathered was valid and meaningful.

For the purpose of the discussion, the communities gathered whenever and wherever they felt convenient, e.g., tea-stalls, in the project sites like the water sources for drinking and irrigation schemes, and porches of their residents. The discussions were enthusiastically participated by

both men and women community members. Most of the discussions were held either in the early morning or in the nights, as the time of visit coincided with the rice planting season. This, however, did not affect the information gathering activity, nor did this interfere with the rice planting activity in any way.

During the field visits, open discussions were held with the program target groups/beneficiaries about the project activities so far implemented focusing mainly on the following aspects.

- Relevance of the project activities to their needs and socio-economic benefits of the project (activities)
- Changes (social, economic, institutional) brought in the community by the project
- Stakeholders' participation including the partner organisations' participation
- Gender and social inclusion/exclusion related issues
- Current status/progress/performance (vis-à-vis the target) and achievements made so far
- Issues/problems encountered during project implementation
- Perceptions of the beneficiaries about the project (whether contributing to overall development of the area/region, motivation/incentive for involvement in project activities, their satisfaction, etc.)
- Perspective of the community beneficiaries about the sustainability aspects of the project
- Suggestions/recommendations for achieving the project objectives within the remaining project period.

For each of the field data collection methods (observation and FGD), a general checklist was developed to be used during the FGD to capture the information required. At the end of discussion with each group, the conclusions (results) of the discussions were also presented to them in order to confirm that the information gathered is valid and meaningful. The participants of these discussions provided some very useful and important suggestions for the future steps to be taken by the implementing agency. The list of the persons and their organizations who participated in the discussions and interviews are presented in Annex I.

2.3.3.2 The workshop

A two-day workshop was organised in Lalitpur district. The MTE process also availed the opportunity to gather relevant information during the workshop. The workshop was participated by the Kathmandu based SAHAS personnel and field-based staffs working in the project areas of all three districts. A list of workshop participants is provided in Annex II. The workshop provided an

opportunity for the consultant to gather detailed information about the project. Participatory assessment of the programme was the key activity of the workshop. The workshop came out with important information generated through district-wise group exercises being done separately by the field based project staffs. The assessment by the participants was done in line with the project's output, effectiveness, relevance and areas for improvement. Two key tools (Format 1 and 2) especially designed to collect the information during the workshop are given in Annex III.

3. The Midterm Evaluation Findings

3.1 Implementation Mechanism

The MTE study also looked into the implementation mechanism adopted by SAHAS-Nepal to ensure the provision of required services to the target groups. The field work and review of the relevant documents reveal that SAHAS-Nepal has a comprehensive implementation scheme (detail planning and annual work plan) which is being followed during the implementation of the project activities for selected communities in the project to ensure that the project is effectively implemented.

SAHAS-Nepal has implemented the project in selected in areas of three project districts. The project areas have been selected and prioritized based on the consultations with VDC and DDC personnel as well as the potential beneficiary communities. The criteria set for the selection of the project areas were as follows:

- Baseline data and situation analysis
- Existence of marginalized cluster of communities with (i) low income level, (ii) high level of illiteracy, (iii) insufficient food and (iv) lack or absence of development services; and
- with openness of community people towards change and development; and

For the human resource required to implement the project, the existing staff SAHAS-Nepal befitting their competencies and job responsibilities, have been involved at all levels. At the grassroots levels, the project area teams are being employed to facilitate in the community level planning, devising requests and providing assistance in the implementation of the intervention needed in the project areas.

After the project areas have been selected, the appropriate project activities for these communities were determined based on the results of the baseline studies, which formed the basis for identifying the nature and the types of intervention needed for a particular project area. More importantly, some specific activities have been implemented mainly based on the requests or resolutions (based on the real needs and genuine problems facing the communities) received from the communities.

For effective implementation of ELLEP, it is being supported by the Kathmandu based staffs of SAHAS-Nepal. SAHAS-Nepal basically made the project plans to be implemented and initiated necessary process for the institutional coordination with other stakeholders. Besides, it also supported for monitoring to be undertaken from the beginning of the project implementation.

3.2 Project Approaches and Modalities

The project adopted a systematic approach for implementing the activities, which involved consultation and collaboration with the stakeholders including partner organizations, selection of target beneficiaries, capacity building of the project staffs and the beneficiaries (through transfer of technology and training) and regular supervision & monitoring of the project's activities through (i) Regular visit to project district: by senior level staff, other stakeholders (line ministries/departments, line agencies, political party representatives and local leaders), (ii) Stakeholders meeting and visit to the project, (iii) Annual and Semi-annual VDCs level review and planning meeting, (iv) District level annual review and planning meeting, (v) Monthly/bi-monthly Team meeting at district /Ilaka levels, etc.

The review of project documents and FGDs conducted during the field visit revealed that the project followed a bottom up approach for implementing the activities. Therefore, the implementation modalities are based on the real needs of the beneficiary farmers. Before the implementation of the project personnel made consultations with the potential beneficiaries and the stakeholders. Additionally, analysis of local situation (household socioeconomic, and feasibility for undertaking home gardens) was also done. During the design stage of the project, the appropriateness of the project activities to the community groups and their members and sustainability aspects were seriously considered.

3.3 Efficiency of the Project

The efficiency of the project has been assessed mainly based on the major components set by the project, targets set and the indicators of achievement due to implementation of various project

activities. As of the reporting period, the project has successfully completed about 90 percent of the total activities, and it is guesstimated that the remaining activities will be completed within the project period, i.e., by December 2012. In terms of the target beneficiary coverage, the project has already covered a total of about 4387 (88.0%) households out of a target of 5000 households in three project districts.

3.3.1 Food Security

The project lunched various and relevant activities with a view to improve the food security situation in the project areas. In assessing the overall progress of the project at this point of time, it was found, that about 94 percent of the total food security related activities have successfully been completed. The project coordinator and the field staffs working in the project districts, based on their working experience gained so far, guesstimate that the remaining nine percent would be completed within the given time frame. The reason for completion of the project activities to such a higher extent is due to timely implementation with the coordination and cooperation (institutional, financial, material, etc.) from the relevant stakeholders including the beneficiary communities' organisations.

Under some of the activities, the project has covered a little more than the set target. Such an increase in activities is reported to be due to the demand received from the communities for their inclusion in the project as beneficiaries. However, the project managed such actions in such a way that it did not have to bear any additional burden, e.g., cost and other resources in the middle of the project implementation process. The activities being launched to improve the food security situation in the project areas/districts are as follows.

- Mushroom farming training and seed support
- FYM and urine management training and input support
- Integrated Pest management training
- Waste-water collection and management training
- Forage production and management training
- Organic vegetable farming training and seed support
- Home garden training
- Agricultural fair and demonstration
- Improved variety seed (maize and cowpea) support
- Training on agricultural crop production to marketing
- Training on Fruit tree pruning, management and sapling support

- Seasonal, off-season and organic vegetable farming training and seed support
- Sustainable soil management and hedge row management training and seedling support
- Chilly nursery management training
- Goat farming training
- Leader-farmers training and support
- Waste-water collection and management training
- Training on fruit tree pruning, management and sapling
- Training on value addition of food items
- Support for irrigation scheme construction and rehabilitation
- Support for construction of farm produce collection centre
- Immediate relief (food grain) support to the fire victims

The implementation of above mentioned food security related activities resulted in enhancement of practical knowledge and skills on the part of the target beneficiaries. The training on various activities has strengthened the capacities of the communities in different aspects of agriculture and livestock such as (i) soil fertility management, (ii) plant nursery management and seed production, (iii) crop (vegetable, cereal, etc.) and livestock production and management, (iv) farm produce storage and marketing, (v) crop pest management, (vi) animal health management (vii) irrigation water management (viii) home gardening, etc.

3.3.2 Income Generation

The project has successfully completed about 95 per cent of its activities until the reporting period. The beneficiaries were involved in various agricultural and non-agriculture economic based activities. Together with this, they were also provided with the relevant training as well material financial support (to some people) with a view to develop skills in them and enhance their economic capacity. Under this output, the following income generation activities have already been carried out in the project districts during the reporting period.

- Training on seasonal and off-season vegetable and support for production
- Bamboo rack and stool making training
- Goat farming training and goat support for small farmers
- Bee keeping training and support for bee-keeping (hive)
- Support for breeding he-goat
- Ginger cultivation training and seed support for production
- Pig-raising training and support for pig-raising (shed)

- Skill and capacity development (radio, TV, mobile phone) training
- Revolving fund support (NRs 5000 per person)
- Animal health worker training
- Training on vegetable farming and support for seed
- Vegetable seed (bitter gourd) support
- Banana-seedling support
- Leader-farmers training and support
- Training on mushroom farming
- Collective ginger farming training and support for production
- Support for collective banana farming
- Support for collective vegetable farming
- Bio-briquette making training and support
- Animal health worker training

The evaluation found that due to launching of the above activities the target communities have been benefited in the following ways: (i) access to materials (briquette-making machine, veterinary related medicines, seeds, tools, bee-hives, goats and pigs for multiplication and breeding purposes, etc.), (ii) access to financial support for investing in operation of small scale-scale businesses such as vegetable selling, grocery shop, poultry and pig farming, and (iii) developed skills for enterprise creation and management of income generating skills through training activities.

3.3.3 Health and Sanitation

The project facilitated to raise awareness on the significance of health and sanitation aspects for living a healthy life. The project also organised health camps to the needy community people in the project districts. The project also organised health programs in some of the schools with a view to improve the health and sanitation status of the students thereby improving their school performance. The following health and sanitation related activities were carried by the project.

- Support for drinking water scheme construction and maintenance
- Smokeless cooking stove training and support for the stove
- Health, nutrition and first-aid
- Training on health, sanitation and nutrition (even in the schools)
- Rainwater harvest and reservoir construction
- Toilet construction
- Support for hydropower scheme (peltric set)

- Improved cooking stoves training
- Fortified food formal-nourished children
- Relief material distribution
- Health camps

With the advent of the project, water is now readily available in abundance and easily accessible for household use, health and sanitation. Learned practical knowledge and skills related to first-aid through training activities. With such knowledge and skills, the communities have made stretchers using the locally available materials. They have also engaged in the treatment of people who met with the accidents in their villages. Using the stretchers they have made, they have also taken the pregnant women to the health posts. At the same time the construction work of toilets are also going on speedily. The health and sanitation activities have enhances the awareness level of the communities about the significance of health and sanitation aspects in their life. They have also been using improved cooking stoves for preparing their meals. With the use of smokeless stoves, they have been able to save not only fire-wood but also their time used for collecting fire-wood. It is interesting to note that they have been using their free time for other productive activities.

3.3.4 Education

The project provided educational, games/sports materials and furniture to 6 primary schools located within the project area. These supports helped in improving the greatly improved the academic environment of the schools. Besides, the NFE classes provided the adults to be literate and numerate, which made their life easier, as they are now able to read, write and understand the printed materials like letters, meeting minutes, books, etc.).

- Training to NFE class facilitator
- Training to child literacy class facilitator
- Adult literacy class
- Support for child class conduction
- Educational materials support
- Refresher training to NFE class facilitator
- Refresher training to child class facilitator
- Quiz-contest and children dance competition
- Support for celebrating children's day (lower secondary school level quiz contest)
- Support for Quiz-contest and essay-writing competition
- Support for school building construction/ and maintenance

- Support for school furniture

Before the introduction of the project, the school-going age children were hesitant to go to schools regularly, and some of them never went to schools. Due to lack of furniture, the school children used to sit on the moist floor. It is now that, because of provision of furniture, the children are being prevented from possible attack by the pneumonia, because they do not have sit on the moist floors. The schools did not have adequate of educational materials. There were also many drop-outs due to lack of resources to support their education. These days the schools have better academic environment with the furniture, educational materials and extra-curricular activities like quiz-contest, essay competition, and celebration of children's day. There has been improvement in the teaching-learning environment with the use of educational materials in the class-rooms.

The conduction of adult literacy classes also contributed to making the literate communities somewhat literate. Before the project intervention, the illiterate communities used to put their thumb-prints to mark their presence in the meetings, as they were not able to write their names. Similarly, the conduction of child literacy classes by involving the trained facilitators also created a favourable environment for the children to become habitual of going to schools.

3.3.5 Institutional Development

In the process of institutional development, SAHAS Nepal also provided information about the project's working areas; project period, implementation mechanism, etc. to the district level stakeholders and the beneficiary communities. SAHAS Nepal also provided information to all categories of communities about the need for formation of groups, through which the project management works. Besides, the project also imparted training on various institutional developments related subjects (group formation and mobilisation, gender awareness and women's legal rights, peace and reconciliation, group accountability in development projects, fund and account management, etc.) to build the capacity of the community based organizations. With a view to build the knowledge and capacity of the community based organizations, the project carried out the following institutional development related activities:

- Peace and reconciliation training
- Publication of collection of farmers' experiences
- Ward level orientation workshop
- VDC level orientation workshop
- VDC level review workshop

- District level project orientation and annual review workshop
- Group formation and mobilisation
- Fund mobilization and account management training
- Group concept and capacity building training
- Training on gender awareness and women's legal rights
- Consumers' committee management training
- Training on drinking water scheme maintenance and users committee management
- Training on concept of main committee
- Institutional development training (main committee)
- Bi-monthly meeting (main committee)
- Outcome orientated training
- Light Search and Rescue Training
- Social gathering and interaction program

3.3.6 CBOs' Network Development

So far, a total 183 community groups have been formed in 16 VDCs of four project districts. Of the 183 groups, 44 groups are composed of only women, 18 groups are of dalits and 110 groups are (mixed groups), i.e., composed of both men and women members. These groups were formed at the facilitation of SAHAS/ELLEP, and the process of such group formation is going on.

- Institutional development training (main committee)
- Honour to groups
- Awareness programme on rights to food
- Support to celebration of special days
- Support to celebration of special days
- VDC level annual review & coordination workshop
- District level advisory committee meeting
- District level annual review workshop
- Training on concept of main committee
- Main committee bi-monthly meeting

Many of the community groups have become capable of working on resource sharing basis with the other development organizations, particularly the local governments (VDCs and DDCs). Many of these have become capable of planning and the putting the plans into action. For example, Milijuli

group of Jogimara in Dhading has installed peltric set with the financial support (Rs. 10,000) they received from the VDC. Similarly, Jaleswari group has done maintenance of drinking water source with the financial assistance (Rs. 50,000) from the DDC. In Benighat, Dalit women group has been able to obtain Rs. 4000 from the VDC, and they constructed pig sheds with this money. The CBOs have been celebrating special days (in partnership with other organizations), and the members are participating in sharing meetings, workshops, seminars and making efforts to link themselves with the village, district and regional level agencies/organizations. Many activities such as organizing training on agriculture, construction of physical infrastructures: drinking water scheme, irrigation schemes, improved water-mills, and celebration of especial days have been undertaken on resource sharing basis (jointly by the ELLEP and other relevant stakeholders).

3.4. Effectiveness of the ELLEP

This section of the evaluation provides whatever the effects/impacts created thus far, as the project is still going on. The effectiveness of the project has been assessed in a broader social, technical and institutional context, while keeping in view the internal factors and limitations associated with the project. At the same time, relationship among overall objectives, activities and inputs have also been viewed in explaining the effects/impacts by the project. As for the efficiency of the project, the effectiveness of the project has also been described along the same aspects, i.e., food security, income generation, health and animation, education, institutional development, and network development of CBOs.

3.4.1 Food Security

The evaluation revealed that before the project intervention, the poor and excluded communities were suffering from the lack of opportunities and access and ownership to food. ELLEP interventions have brought significant positive changes in the socio-economic behaviour of the people. Before the advent of the ELLEP, the communities had only the traditional farming knowledge and skills. During the field work, it was also heard from some of the communities that they were using only the local seeds, and not even aware of the availability of improved farm technologies, and pest and soil management techniques.

The project activities brought substantial changes in the communities' farming behaviour that eventually contributed to improvement in their food security situation. The farmers applied the knowledge and skills gained from the training in their farming activities. The communities who

received training on mushroom farming and support for seeds have been able to grow mushrooms during the period when vegetables are not available. It is now that the farmers have made mind to continue to grow mushrooms even without the external support. They requested the project staffs to bring mushroom seeds for them. Some 33 farmers have been able to increase their production level by using human and animal urine as fertiliser and by reducing the extent of pest attack through the use of self-made pesticide in vegetable farming.

It is very interesting to note that 358 farm households in Dhading district alone have been able to increase the level of soil fertility by protecting the compost from the sun light and rainfall. They have also learned soil conservation practises even in the sloppy land by planting the forage (grass) using the technique called Slopping Agriculture Land Technology (SALT). With the use of SALT, they have been able to protect their lands from landslides, floods and other types of natural calamities.

Similarly, 356 farmers belonging to 33 groups have started consuming the vegetables being grown in their own farm. With the increase in production, these farmers have gradually stopped buying the vegetables from the market, besides improving their own nutritional status. Some farmers have also started growing seeds and distributed to their group members. Twenty-four farmers have been able to increase their rice yield from 215 Muri to 290 Muri from the same unit of land. By demanding from the project staffs, some farmers have also planted 2350 fruit saplings including orange saplings. With the knowledge and skills gained from the training, some farmers even started taking their produce being grown through their groups and cooperatives to the market, which gave them reasonable price.

It was articulated by the communities during the FGD (Dhading) that before the advent of the project they used to have inadequate supply of irrigation water for the dry season. With the coming up of the irrigation scheme (plastic irrigation pond), they have been able to grow vegetables even in the dry season.

3.4.2 Income Generation

The evaluation revealed that the project has been instrumental in bringing some immediate and tangible changes. With the receipt of these benefits while some communities have been undertaking their enterprises individually, the others are operating on collective basis.

The immediate and visible change in the project areas is that there is an increase in the number of goats including the improved breeds produced from crossing with local breeds. The beneficiary communities have increased their income level as a result of their engagement in some income generating activities like vegetable farming, beekeeping, goat and pig farming and by providing veterinary service to the needy people. They now bring the seeds for farming on their own, without relying on others. Besides fulfilling their nutritional needs through vegetable consumption with daily meals, they have also started earning cash from the sale of surplus vegetables in the local market. They have become aware of the fact that there is a need to grow vegetables for supplementing the nutritional requirement of human beings together with their regular meals.

The vegetable production scheme is found to be one of the important activities to enhance household income and promote nutritional aspects of the human diet through supply of adequate quantity of vegetables at the household consumption and marketing of the surplus produce. The communities have considered 'an access to financial sources is a powerful means for poverty reduction'. There are cases where the farmers have increased their level of income by engaging in other economically productive activities. For example, some beneficiaries in Tanahu district have been able to earn Rs. 2500 to 4000 individually from the sale of goats being raised by them. With such an income they have been meeting their household expenses. Similarly, there are also beneficiaries who have also started earning up to Rs. 12500 from the sale of bamboo-stools, by using the skills acquired from the training they have undergone.

It was also heard during the FGD in one of the project areas Tanahu district that after initiation of commercial vegetable farming, the Chepang (an ethnic group in Nepal) youth stopped going to foreign countries in quest of job opportunities, while they have been prevented from being cheated by the business companies and individuals who are dealing with the business of sending people abroad. It also came from the FGD that many farmers have stopped borrowing money from the local merchants at much higher interest rates, after they started earning from the income generation activities.

3.4.3 Health and Sanitation

The community people have started working collectively for keeping their locality neat and clean. They have been managing the garbage that area decomposable and non-decomposable separately. There is an improved health and nutrition, and reduced expenditure on medical care.

The use of smokeless cooking stoves by the communities has led to relief from the smoke that affected their eyes. At the same time they have also been able to save time as well as the fuel-wood consumption. The communities also expressed that the use of smokeless stove would also reduce the likelihood of accidents due to fire.

The health and sanitation in the individuals and around household premises has also improved. They expect that with the coming up of private toilets, there will not be scattering of human waste in the surroundings. Similarly, the incidence of illnesses such as diarrhea, dysentery, fever skin diseases like scabies, and other water-borne diseases has also been reduced to a considerable extent due to availability of adequate water. The availability of water in abundance right in their locality has also provided them with opportunity to grow more vegetables for home consumption. This has contributed to improvement in their daily-diet, in nutritional terms. In Tanahu district, a total of 164 households have been benefited from the construction of seven drinking water schemes. The availability of water around their home premises has also reduced the burden on women by reducing the distance to be travelled to fetch the water from far away sources.

With regard to micro-hydro project, the communities have said that the basic necessary infrastructures (installation of polls, extension of wires and other materials) are already in place, and they expect that they would get the power supply very soon. Thus far, there seems to be no any output produced from the micro-hydro project. However, the project expects to bring the rich local water resources into use for electricity generation to the benefit of the communities.

3.4.4 Education

It is now that with the launching of the above mentioned activities resulted in the improvement of the educational environment of the school and the communities. The conduction of child classes contributed to creating an environment for the children to go to school. The students now go to the school regularly and eagerly, and happy with the desk and benches to study in their class-rooms. The children who have completed their child literacy class have been enrolled in the nearby primary schools. It is quite note worthy that those who stood in the class as first, second and third ranks are the child literacy class graduates (Dhading).

Similarly, due to participation in the adult literacy classes, the illiterate communities are now able to write their names and keep their group-accounts properly in black and white. It is also quite interesting to note that the level of coordination between school management and SAHAS-Nepal has been increased; thus resulting in initiation of some partnership activities for improving the educational environment of the school and communities.

3.4.5 Institutional Development

With the orientation/information given to the district level authorities and political parties about the project, SAHAS Nepal was granted permission to implement the project in the districts. The government as well as non-government organizations and political parties from the VDC level to district level have been giving their support and cooperation to the project. Communities' groups have been formed based on gender equality and social inclusion principles. The project implementation mechanism adopted by SAHAS-Nepal has been accepted by all the individual and organizations.

The community groups have been keeping their groups account in a proper way. These groups prepare their annual work-plan and implement accordingly. At the same time these groups have also been operating their saving and credit schemes. With the capacity they have built, they have started working by accessing the local level resources. The communities have been participating in the project organized training, workshop, meetings, and development activities. There has been significant level of women's participation in such activities. Women are given priority in decision-making activities. Women's participation accounts for 50 percent at the decision-making level.

Those who have gained knowledge and skill from the training programme have been utilizing these knowledge and skills in their every-day practical life. The communities have been working through their groups by making necessary policies and regulations to make the project activities sustainable. At the same, SAHAS-Nepal has been receiving necessary cooperation and commitments from the government agencies and the political parties and local governments. All the stakeholders have also been actively participation in the review programmes and meetings related to the project. The project staffs have also been performing better after they developed various skills in them from the training they have undergone. While they have improved in the working style, they have also become more committed towards the project.

3.4.6 CBOs Network Development

The project has been instrumental in mustering the unorganised communities through various activities towards the development of their own network. The project created an enabling environment and opportunities for individuals and CBOs for a unified action especially for the cause of their own community development. While the project has helped raise the awareness level of the communities through various activities, it has been an eye-opener for the communities in general about the significance of the network for their own development.

3.5 Spill over effect of the project

The non-target communities have highly appreciated the activities under the ELLEP. They also realised that various types of activities and support provided to the communities have, in fact, been a matter of great opportunity to the communities. This is because they never thought of improving their social and economic condition, as they do not possess the capacity to afford on their own to come to this status.

The non-target communities also realised the indirect influence of the project, which encouraged them to initiate some development activities, especially farming activities using the improved technologies. As was learnt during the field work, the non-target communities became highly motivated to initiate development activities when they saw their fellow residents engaging in development activities with social and economic benefits.

4. Relevance of the Project

The project carries a high level of relevance to development objectives at all levels, i.e. micro: responding to the needs of the poor and marginalized; meso: district level development programmes; and macro: Nepal government's national objective of providing the food and nutrition security and other development needs.

Response to the Millennium Development Goals: The project is contributing to achieving Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal No. 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), Goal No.2 (Achieve Universal primary education); Goal No. 3(Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women; Goal No. 4 (Reduce child mortality); Goal No. 5 (Improve Maternal Health), to some extent Goal 6 (HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases); and Goal No. 7 (Ensure Environmental Sustainability).

Response to national development objective: The project is also in line with the national development objectives of the government of Nepal. This is because the Three Year Plan Approach Paper (2010/11 – 2012/13) aims to provide development opportunities by empowering the backward people and indigenous/ethnic communities, who are unable to participate actively in the

mainstream development programmes of Nepal. The project also aims at uplifting the socio-economic status of the poor and marginalised people.

Besides, the project activities are much in line with the development programmes of the DDCs and VDCs of the project districts. This is to say that the project activities have implemented as part and parcel of the district level and VDC level programmes. That is why, the activities of the ELLEP has been officially endorsed by the respective DDCs and VDCs as well.

Response to inclusive development: One of the significant aspects of the ELLEP is that it focuses mainly on the women, smallholders and near landless farmers who are often excluded by the mainstream agricultural programmes. During the field visit, the beneficiaries of the project reported that they have never been able to access the services available with the government and non-government development organizations in their districts. In this sense, this project's intervention responded to the needs of the resource-poor and un-reached segment of the rural society, when they are expecting some kind of peace dividend and development service delivery in the changed political context of the country. The project has selected the poor, excluded (especially so-called low-caste people), Janajati and women as its main target beneficiaries at the time when the country is striving for an inclusive development. The targeting of women, smallholders and near landless farmers who are often excluded by the mainstream development programmes by the project is in line with the government's commitment to bring them in the mainstream development.

Response to food and nutrition security: At the micro level, the project can be considered as one of the appropriate approaches towards the Nepal government's efforts to responding to ensure food and nutrition security. The challenge facing the Government of Nepal is to increase the growth rate of agriculture produces and a limit the soaring food prices. Due to these reasons the government experiences pressure on availability and accessibility of food and the task of ensuring food security to the poor and rural communities. In this context, the implementation of the project that has contributed, to some extent, to the food and nutrition security of the rural poor, small holders and marginalized people needs to be applauded.

In the above-mentioned context, the implementation of the ELLEP has immense relevance to the socio-economic upliftment of the poor and marginalized communities. The implementation of ELLEP appropriately responds to the appeal of the Government of Nepal to the donor and NGO communities to contribute for the development opportunity to the backward communities.

Additionally, the nature of the project, which is integrated and multi-sectoral in its approach to address the genuine socio-economic problems of the poor communities, is very much appropriate in considering their immediate needs and the problems of the community. Specifically, the implementation of the project indeed has also contributed towards preventing the vulnerability of the poor and excluded people, in particular. The project has succeeded in reaching the target groups in terms of directing the services to be delivered in bringing favourable socioeconomic changes in them.

5. Sustainability of the Project

The ELLEP seems to be well accepted and respected by the communities, besides the stakeholders. The project has contributed to formation and strengthening of community organization of groups. There seems to be a positive indication of sustainability, as the project's activities appeared to be very feasible due to wide social acceptance by the community beneficiaries including the others who are not (directly) part of the project. Due to the project's concentration on the poor living in the remote rural areas, the project cannot be expected initially to mobilize financial resources from the communities large enough to support the continuation of the project's activities.

From the FGDs with the communities during the fieldwork, it transpired that virtually the development project of this type can be self-sustaining only if the communities are capable of raising funds and accessing other resources from the development agencies. There for the project needs to focus some of its activities in such a way that the community organizations are able to successfully undertake even other income generation activities, eventually contributing to financial sustainability.

The sustainability of the community organizations has a substantial bearing on the sustainability of the project activities. As it appeared, the project has been forming the community organizations and strengthening their capabilities with the objective of forming a network of these organizations towards the end of the project phase. For the ELLEP activities to continue at the community level, strategic plans should be developed as to how the project activities could be sustained. This implies a need for SAHAS to create an enabling environment for the community organisations to continue with the ELLEP activities even after the phase out of the

programme. For this, institutional, social (human resource) and financial aspects of these community organizations need to be strengthened for the overall sustainability of these groups.

6. Success Factors of the Project Implementation

The MTE found that the project is moving ahead with high rate of success of implementation. There are various factors contributing to the success of the project. The key factors that have implications for future undertaking of the project are described as follows. These success factors are the aspects that need to be considered and prompted for the successful implementation of the next phase of the project as well.

- (a) **Communities' needs/problems based:** The activities carried out under each of the expected output of the project are very much in line with the basic social, economic and institutional needs and problems of the beneficiary communities. The project has addressed the basic development needs of men and women from poor, marginalized and disadvantaged groups through implementation of various social and economic activities and support to them.
- (b) **Targeting and selection of beneficiaries:** The careful selection of the beneficiaries (the women, poor and marginalized people) who are really looking forward for some development opportunities for improving the quality of their life (e.g., through increased food security, improving livelihood, health, education and institutional development). Given the nature and objective of the project and its activities, it is genuinely appropriate for the poor, and marginalized farmers, and disadvantaged segment of the society.
- (c) **Local capacity building:** Capacity building of the beneficiaries through knowledge, skill, inputs, etc., project staffs and CBOs. The project supported to develop community based organizations; and their mobilization has contributed to successful implementation of the project activities.
- (d) **Communities' genuine participation and ownership:** It is in fact the commitment and hardworking of the communities in general and women, the poor, marginalized and

disadvantaged group that contributed to keep the ELLE project alive and give continuity to the project.

- (e) **Ownership by local communities:** The other factor for the success is the ownership feeling by the community people over the project activities. The communities have whole-heartedly felt that whatever activities launched by the project are for them and for their well being. They also have a feeling that it for them to manage and utilize these activities.
- (f) **Integrated approach:** The project encompass an integrated approach of project implementation which allows incorporation of basic and essential components such food security, income generation, health/sanitation, education and institutional development that are required for improving their social and economic status. During the interaction with the beneficiaries in the project districts, they appreciated the project's various technical, financial, capacity development and institutional support provided to the community beneficiaries.
- (g) **Social acceptance:** The ELLEP, irrespective of the caste/ethnicity, and gender and class, has been accepted by the communities as being very appropriate for meeting their food needs, besides improving their other aspects of life. The MTE, during the visit to the project districts, noted that the communities (both: project beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries) in the project districts have positive attitude towards the project.
- (h) **Optimistic Incentive to the households:** There has been some level of increase in household food and nutrition security besides the cash income for some Home Garden project beneficiaries; a form of positive and quick incentive. This is one of the major reasons attributable to the success of the project.
- (i) **Resource sharing with the stakeholders:** SAHAS-Nepal implemented the project in collaboration and coordination with the local governments, sectoral line agencies and other development agencies, rather than implementing it as a standalone project. The collaboration and coordination with these agencies provided an opportunity for the implementation of the project on resource sharing basis, which in turn created a kind of synergies to undertake the project activities more efficiently and effectively.

7. Issues/Challenges Related to Project Implementation

Even though the implementation of the project is moving towards its completion (of Phase I), the project came across some issues which need to be resolved. The strategies adopted to resolve such issues can be taken as lessons for the implementation of the remaining activities of this phase of the project, as well as the next phase. The issues are as follows.

(a) Lack of resources

The project encountered some difficulty (hindrance) in the implementation of project activities. For example, as the facilitators gave up the job in the middle of the process, the conduction of child literacy class was delayed. This implies that there is a need to identify and recruit facilitators who are committed to completion of the assigned task. Similarly, due to lack of resources (financial) the communities are not able to contribute the committed resource as per the agreement; thus causing delay in project implementation.

(b) Communities' high expectation from the project

The communities have a very high level expectation from the project. This kind of attitude and expectation of the communities is making the project implementation difficult, because they think that the project is entirely responsible for all the development activities to be launched under the project. Some beneficiaries ask for the vegetable seeds again and again, even though there is no such provision from the project. This implies that, at the very outset, the project needs to clearly explain the nature of the project and the responsibilities of the stakeholders including the communities for the implementation of the project. This will help understand the roles and responsibilities to be taken and contributions to be made by the stakeholders.

(c) Withdrawal by the community groups

The project also noticed one group withdrawing from its engagement in the project activities. Such cases make it difficult for the project to achieve its target (in terms of number of households and community groups). While selecting the members for the formation of community groups, it must be confirmed that the members will not give up the group, and they would remain as group and continue to work under the project.

(d) Difficult work situation

Geographical remoteness and out-migration of the youth are causing a little difficulty in the implementation of the project. Such a situation is also demanding more time for monitoring and

meeting with the beneficiaries. Because of the out-migration of youth, i.e., youths are withdrawing from their groups, such groups are becoming less active.

(e) Inadequate utilization of skills resources

Some training participants have not been able to properly utilize their skills because of lack of the tools/implements for utilizing the skills. Similarly, some group members have not utilized the financial support being provided to them for income generation. There is a need for support for the tools/implements by the project under such circumstances.

(f) Lack of market linkage

Some project beneficiaries who grew ginger and vegetables could not get good market price due to geo-physical condition of the target VDCs and transportation facilities. There is need for development of market and linking the farmers with the market. The complaint is that the farmers are not able to get genuine value for their products and instead the middle-persons are making more margin than the farmers. This implies an activity for market development, and marketing managing training to the farmers and collection centre.

(g) Mismatch in the programme cycle

There is mismatch between the government of Nepal's fiscal year and SAHAS's programme cycle. There is often difficulty in joint planning and implementation because of differential timing of budget release by the stakeholders. This was experienced in implementation of drinking water scheme, where the project could not be completed within the stipulated timeframe.

(h) Scaling up of the project activities

The project has already facilitated to provide the basic social, financial and institutional infrastructures in the project areas. It is now that the communities recognize the need to upgrade the existing activities for higher income and employment. For example, the farming beneficiaries in the project areas are demanding for green-houses to grow more and off-season vegetables.

(i) Capacity and turnover of the project staff: During the interaction with the project staffs, they clearly indicated that they would be in a better position to effectively implement the project activities, if their capacities are enhanced betting the activities to be implemented in the next phase of the project.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

The MTE found the project is moving smoothly with its planned activities towards fulfillment of achieving its objectives. The progress and performance of the project is also highly satisfactory, as it has completed about 90 percent of its activities. The project is also highly relevant in terms of not only fulfilling their development needs, but also paved a path by supporting them for sustainability of their livelihoods to a considerable extent. The project has addressed the beneficiaries' problems through motivational and awareness activities thus encouraging them to be genuinely engaged in the project activities.

Despite limitations and deviations in some cases, there are many instances where achievements have exceeded expectations, and additional activities have also been carried out by the project. These achievements are commendable considering the present unstable political situation of the country. The project was found to be effectively managed by SAHAS-Nepal. During the field visit also, by nowhere did the beneficiaries raise any grouse concerning project implementation, which in itself is an indication of good work.

8.2 Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the project implementation, performance, effects/impacts and issues emerged, and taking into account the information gathered during the course of the study, the following recommendations are put forward for improvements for the on-going project and the subsequent second phase of the project.

- Capacity building efforts at the grassroots level should be group specific and tailored accordingly for enhancing livelihoods and special skills. It is advisable to conduct capacity analysis of the groups to understand their problems, issues and abilities to effectively raise their level of capacity. Since the groups visited in the project district demanded some more specific training activities (e.g., green-house farming, commercial vegetable farming, animal health, marketing management, conduction of cold store, etc.), this should be given more emphasis by the project.
- Since not all the members of the community groups are equally capable of contributing resources (labour, cash, kind, etc.), separate strategy should be developed to enable the most

deprived and so-called lower caste community to effectively participate in and benefit from development interventions.

- Keeping in view the efficient and effective implementation of the project, capacity building of the project staffs should be given priority in the areas of primary project activities before the initiation of the second phase of the project.
- The MTE noticed (from annual progress report of 2011), turnover of the project staff in the middle of the project implementation. Therefore, it is desirable that project would review its management policies in view of staff retention for longer periods since it can ensure quality service and commitment for the positive impact of the project.
- The need for market development and marketing management was realised by the communities for enhancement of competitiveness of their products. This implies that in future, the project would give emphasis to development of business plan, production planning, and promoting marketing of their products. The activities under marketing management would also include strengthening of producers' groups/collection centers and cooperatives for marketing of their products on their own. The project should also target for moving the activities upward from the stagnant or subsistence levels to enterprise levels by designing proper strategies.
- Further strengthen the link with various institutions and mechanisms like local governments and line agencies to ensure better implementation of Phase-II and the remaining project period. As far as possible, the project should make effort to match its activities with the budget release time of other development agencies for a particular project activity so that the project could be completed as per the plan.
- Given the fact that the process of male migration is on the increasing trend over time in the country, the project needs to think of some activities that would either prevent youth migration or their replacement in the community groups. The project requires community participation and hence there is a chance of being negatively affected by migration. Therefore, the project needs to think carefully while selecting the target beneficiaries.
- The sustainability of ELLEP is contingent upon the growth and development of the CBOs and its network organisations to be formed at the end of the project cycle. The project activities will continue to exist only if these network organizations are strong enough

financially, technically and institutionally. The issue in this respect is not that of capacity building of the network organizations but also linking these organizations with other development agencies for their official recognition at the district level. Therefore, this is where the project needs pay special attention before leaving the districts.

The next phase project formulation/planning team would need to contemplate the above-mentioned success factors, issues/challenges and recommendations for strategic project design and implementation framework.

ANNEXES

Annex I: A list of participants in the workshop

S.N.	Name	Designation
1	Jib Nath Sharma	Project Coordinor
2	Hari Ram Lohani	Team Leader – Dhading
3	Mina Shakya	Team Leader – Gorkha
4	Debindra Karki	Team Leader – Tanahu
5	Pampha basnet	JTA Agri.
6	Nabin Dhital	JTA Agr.
7	Anil Shrestha	Senior Community Dev. Worker
8	Ambika Shrestha	ANM
9	Hari Prasad Adhikari	Field Officer
10	Ganesh Thapa	Infrastructure technician
11	Pampha Gurung	Senior Community Dev. Worker
12	Uma Rana Magar	Administrative and Finance assistant
13	Nagina Shrestha	Infrastructure Technician
14	Menuka Shrestha	JTA agriculture
15	Bramha Dhoj Gurung	Chairperson- SAHAS- Nepal
16	Dr. Surendra Shrestha	Executive Director – SAHAS- Nepal
17	Claudia	Advisor

Annex II: Some Photographs during Mid Term Evaluation Workshop



Resource Person



Group Interaction



Participants attending in a workshop



Discussing in a meeting



A Women showing her fruit product