

**MID TERM EVALUATION REPORT
ON
Community Empowerment for Food and Livelihood Security
(CEFALS) Project**



SUBMITTED TO:
Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS) Nepal

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Community Empowerment for Food and Livelihood Security (CEFALS) Project

1. Introduction

The Community Empowerment for Food and Livelihood Security (CEFALS) Project has been implemented in two districts (Mugu and Kalikot) of Karnali Zone of Mid-western Development Region and one district (Bajura) of Seti Zone of Far-western Development Region. The project covers a total of 15 VDCs, with the tripartite development cooperation and effort of the Finish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), EED Germany and SAHAS-Nepal since 2010. The goal of the project is to contribute food and livelihood security and manage livelihood through empowering focus community groups/institutions, i.e., CBOs network organizations in each district. The project consists of two phases. The first phase started from January 2009 and ends by December 2012.

The target of the project include: the poor men, women, girls, boys, people with disabilities and minority groups. The project has been implemented through community based organizations (CBOs) being fumed by the beneficiary communities themselves in facilitation of SAHAS-Nepal. It is through these CBOs that the target beneficiaries participate in the project activities. The project is also implemented in close coordination and cooperation with other stakeholders such as local governments (Village development Committees, District Development Committees), sectoral line agencies, and other NGOs operating in the project districts.

2. Mid Term Evaluation of CEFALS

The review involves reflection on current phase and is forward-looking, and recommendations for the second phase. The project has already completed its two years and six months. As per the agreement with SAHAS-Nepal, the mid-term evaluation, in particular, focused on the following: (i) the present status of the project, (ii) the implementation process of the project, (iii) actions required to complete the rest of the activities (to achieve the set objectives), (iv) propose a 'Way forward' for the Phase II. The MTE has been done in line with the project's seven major expected outputs, which include the following:

- (i) Development partnership with the poor and marginalized communities established and community groups/institutions empowered (i.e. CBOs network their livelihood development programs organization) to manage.

- (ii) Socio- political and economic context and systems of the project focus communities and districts assessed
- (iii) Family food production and cash income necessary to enhance food security increased.
- (iv) Rural micro-enterprises utilizing local resources and knowledge for women, youth, and conflict affected facilities established
- (v) Health and sanitation necessary for a healthy and productive life of beneficiary households/ families improved
- (vi) Education facilities and environment for beneficiary households/families and their children improved
- (vii) Improved infrastructures facilities for enhanced livelihoods

3. Methodology

In order to achieve the anticipated output guided by the TOR, the consultant has adopted the following MTE methodology employed comprised of (i) Desk study (ii) Workshop and (iii) Consultation. The process followed for the MTE is presented in Fig. 1. The MTE used both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.1 Desk study

The basic preparation for the MTE was done by reviewing the documents related to the CEFALS project. The desk study involved the collection and review of both published and unpublished materials related to CEFALS. It must be mentioned here that the MTE did not repeat the assessment on the matters, on which the information already exist through secondary sources. However, this information has been utilized by the MTE for its purpose.

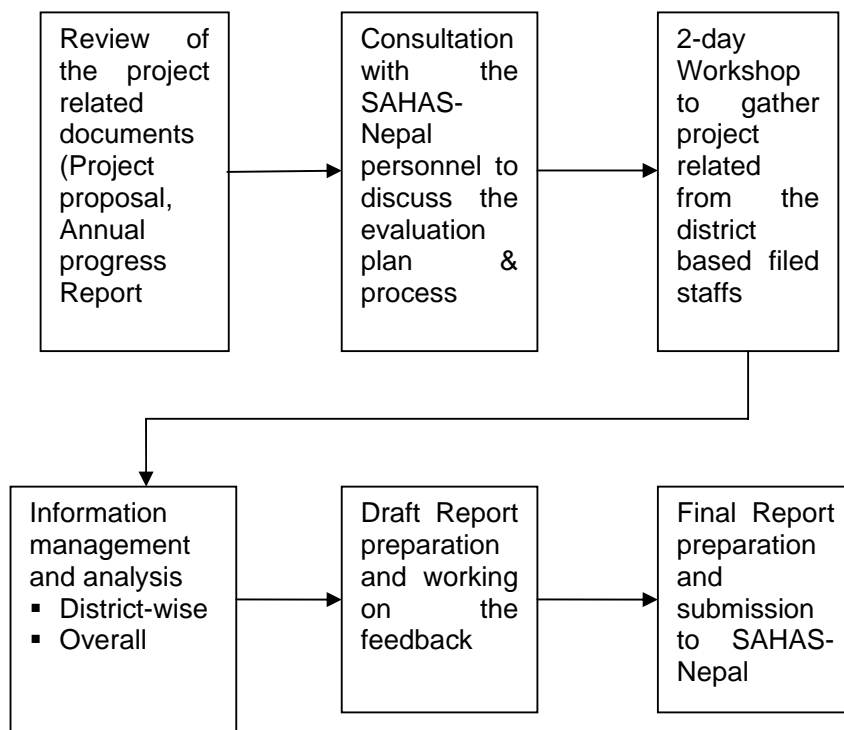
3.2 Consultation

A series of close consultation meetings were also held with senior staffs working for SAHAS in Kathmandu to understand how the concept and practice of CEFALS have been designed and implemented. The pertinent comments and suggestions received from them have been incorporated into this report.

3.3 The Workshop

The 2-day workshop organized in Nepalgunj is, in fact, one of the key methods for the consultant to gather relevant information. The MTE used participatory discussion and sharing experiences. The participants (project staffs from Bajura, Kalikot and Mugu districts) actively participated in the district-wise group exercise to furnish relevant data and information for assessing the output and outcome of the project from their respective districts. The project staffs from three different project districts worked separately and made presentation during the workshop in order to verify the information they furnished. Besides, the SAHAS Nepal's staffs from its central office in Kathmandu were also present in the workshop. The names of the workshop participants are given in Annex I.

Fig 1: The MTE Process



4. The MTE Results

4.1 Overall Impression of the Project

Despite the unprecedented political changes in recent times, the poverty, injustice and poor governance still persist owing to deep-rooted socio-economic and political exclusion of some groups of people coupled with uneven geographical development and poor governance. Patriarchal structure prevalent in the Nepalese society has placed women in a discriminated position regardless of class, caste, ethnicity, religion and age. A huge gap persists between men and women both in terms of opportunities for employment and income generation. Similarly, geographic location has been a strong exclusionary factor in Nepal, particularly for excluded groups. The government alone has not been able to deliver effective services to the most remotely located communities. Given this context, the implementation of CEFALS Project in 15 districts of Mid-western Development Region and Far-western Development Region can be considered as one of the contributing steps for narrowing down the existing socio-cultural, economic and institutional gaps.

The project is moving towards the attainment of the goal. The progress made by the project so far is highly satisfactory in the sense that it has been able to achieve the targets of the activities and beneficiaries being set. The groups being formed have been actively participating in the project activities. Similarly, the stakeholders have also been extending their human, financial and other resources to the CEFALS project, as the project is being implemented on resource sharing basis. The target communities have also been utilizing the knowledge and skills they have learned through various training and other activities in their real life situation.

The project has thus far covered 3,362 households through the formation of 145 community based organizations (CBOs) and provided these organizations with group strengthening training such as action plan, leadership, book keeping, and resource information. As a result of the project implementation, significant and positive changes in the attitude and behavior of the community people could be observed. The community people now come to take initiatives on their own as compared to their dependency mentality before the introduction of the project in their villages. A number of noticeable positive social and economic changes have been taken place even at this point of time.

The project adopted a systematic approach for implementing the activities, which involved consultation and collaboration with the relevant stakeholders including the local community organizations. Similarly, the project selected the target beneficiaries as per the objectives of the project, and built the capacity of the project staffs and the beneficiaries (through transfer of technology). Besides, regular supervision & monitoring of the project's filed activities by the project staffs and visits to group meetings were found to be the features of the project.

4.2 The Project Implementation Mechanism

Before the implementation of the project, the SAHAS-Nepal staffs held interactions with the local people both formally and informally with a view to understand the local social, economic, physical, political and institutional contexts, including the presence of other development agencies in those districts. The interaction/discussion focused mainly on felt-needs and real problems of the communities, how could the project's budget be best utilized for the benefit of the communities. SAHAS-Nepal implemented the project activities in close coordination and collaboration with other development agencies in the project districts.

As the project district are located in the remote mountain areas of Nepal and, characterized by food insecure, low life expectancy and low women empowerment index, the project placed first priority for awareness raising, capacity building and empowerment of women and dalits. The project was implemented following the participatory approach, and on resource sharing basis with the stakeholders. All the project activities were lunched through the CBOs so that they are aware of what is going on in their own community. The resource sharing approach adopted by SAHAS-Nepal encouraged both the communities as well as the stakeholders such as local governments (Village development Committees, District Development Committees), district level sectoral line agencies in the project districts. While implementing the project, gender equality and social inclusion were duly considered with a view to accrue the benefits of the development to these segments of the society. Similarly, the project also adopted rights based approach to development in order to educate the communities about their rights to development and development programs in their villages.

SAHAS-Nepal has been monitoring the project activities from time to time by involving the stakeholders especially the local governments (VDCs and DDCs). Monitoring is being done at the field level by the project staffs, while VDC and district level project review meetings are also

periodically held to monitor the project. Besides, monitoring has also been done from the SAHAS's personnel based in central office in Kathmandu.

4.3 Efficiency and Effects of the Project

The efficiency of the project been assessed mainly based on the major outputs produced as result of implementation of various project activities. In order to assess the efficiency of the project, the MTE compared the achievements of the progress made so far as compared to the indicators set forth. While assessing the efficiency, the additional activities that were not envisaged by the project have also been taken into consideration. The efficiency and effectiveness of the project have been assessed focusing on the seven major outputs it has expected to achieve.

On the whole, it was found that the project activities designed and targeted were completed to a satisfactory level, given the time period of the project has already passed, i.e., 2 years and 6 months. About 80 percent of the total activities have been completed. As per the project coordinators and the field staffs during the workshop for information gathering for the purpose of the MTE, it was guesstimated that the remaining activities under each of the components will be completed within the given time period. The component-wise efficiency of the project is described below.

Output 1: Development Partnership with the poor and marginalized communities established and community groups/institutions (CBOs network organization) empowered to manage their livelihood development programs.

The major activities carried out to achieve this output are as follows:

- VDC level orientation and review workshop
- DDC level review program
- Ward level meeting/Tole meeting
- Group formation
- Group concept workshop
- Group strengthening training
- Saving and credit training
- Husband and Wife, Mother-in-Law and Daughter- in-Law interaction program
- Group leadership development training
- Coordination meeting with stakeholders
- Human right/Economic, Social and Cultural Right Training

- VDC Level Main committee formulation concept workshop
- Awareness raising Play-show
- Awareness raising Folksong competition
- Main committee formulation

In terms of the complementation progress of the activities, it appears that about 80.00 percent of the activities have been completed in all the three districts. According to the CEFAL project's annual project report, a total of 145 CBOs have been formed and strengthen through the implementation of the above-mentioned activities.

The interaction program among family members such as husbands and wives, mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws resulted in a good understanding about the status and role of male and female members not only in their families but also in the community development activities. Similarly, there has been increase in women's participation in community development works.

Because of participation in various group formation and institutional development trainings such as leadership development, coordination with the stakeholders, saving/credit training, and group strengthening training, many of the poor and marginalized communities have been able to establish their own community groups/ institutions (CBOs network organization). With the skills they have learned they have the feeling that they have been institutionally empowered to manage their social and economic development program at the community level. Similarly, with the participation in training on Human right/Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the communities have become more aware of their Human/economic, social and cultural Rights and their rights to development.

The expected outcome is to develop partnership with the poor and marginalized communities established and to empower the community groups/ institutions (CBOs network organization) to manage their livelihood development programs by themselves. Many farmers have become able to generate income from their surplus products and consume fresh vegetables. The community people are able to read and write their names, do signatures, and make decisions after they attended the Rights based literacy classes.

As it appeared from the MTE, the implementation of the project indicated that the majority of its activities contributed to substantial and positive social and economic changes in the lives of communities. In other words, most of the project activities have, at large, directly benefited the poor, particularly the women, socially and geographically excluded segment of the society.

Similarly, the communities' participation various institutional development training has also enhanced their capabilities to identify and prioritise their problem and look for the ways of mitigating those problems. The institutional capacities the groups have developed also rendered them as institutionally self-reliant to some extent.

Output 2: Socio-political and economic context and systems of the project focus communities and districts assessed

- Baseline survey
- Gender awareness training
- Coordination meeting with the stakeholders

While conducting baseline study, the project also conducted need assessment study of the beneficiary communities. These activities helped to identify the social and economic status and living condition and project activities to be carried out based on the needs and problems of the target communities. The gender awareness training made the communities aware of various types of gender-based discriminatory practices existing in their communities and the necessity to change in individuals' attitude and behavior towards the female family members by minimizing such discriminations. There is a growing extent of participation of women in the project activities. Besides the increased gender awareness among the community people, the massive out-migration of male household members in quest of jobs in urban areas and abroad has also been stated as one of the reasons for increased participation of women in the community development activities.

Similarly, SAHAS also had coordination meeting with the local stakeholders including the line agencies. This meeting helped to create an enabling environment among the stakeholders for resource sharing as per their interest and capabilities.

As a consequence of the implementation of the above mentioned project activities, the environment in the families has been improved in the sense that there is reduced domestic violence as well as reduced gender based discriminatory practices. Especially, the women household members seemed to be happy with the behaviour of their male counterparts. Having participated in the training, the participants also realized that there is a need to create pleasant environment in the households.

Output 3: Family food production and cash income necessary to enhance food security increased.

Under this output, the project rendered its support to the beneficiary communities through the following activities.

- Goat farming training and goat distribution
- Poultry farming training and distribution
- General animal health camp
- Shed management and primary animal health care training
- Vegetable farming training (specific vegetable)
- Commercial vegetable training
- Home gardening training
- Mushroom cultivation training
- Potato chips training
- Waste water management
- Apple nursery establishment
- Apple cultivation training and seedlings support
- Apple storage training and tourism
- Training on pruning of apple
- Poly-bag making, insect-pest management training and seed support
- Hay, Silage and mineral block making training
- Sustainable Soil & Urine Management training
- Sauce making training
- Off season Vegetable farming training (specific vegetable) and distribution of green house
- Forage and fodder production training
- Mineral block making training
- Irrigation canal maintenance
- FYM Improvement training
- High Value crops promotion
- Food bank establishment

The launching of above-mentioned activities resulted in the capacity development of the beneficiary communities through skill development in them, access to various necessary farm inputs and facilities including irrigation water. From the training they received, the awareness levels of the beneficiary households have also increased in understanding about the importance of improved farming system (vegetable and fruit cultivation and livestock keeping), besides other sources of income generation. This in turn made them for searching new varieties of crops and other agricultural innovations.

The CEFALS project provided the beneficiaries with seeds of improved crop varieties and appropriate farm technology (e.g., high value off-season vegetable farming), and necessary skill development training for undertaking farm activities by adopting improved technologies on a commercial scale.

The project has contributed to enhancing the food supply and food security of the target beneficiaries. There is enhancement of production and productivity of food mainly because of (i) increased cropping intensity with the availability of irrigation facilities (ii) use of improved farming system and through exploiting maximum possible production capacity of the farm lands, (iv) improvement in irrigation facilities and (v) replacement of low value traditional crops such as corn, millet, and wheat by high value commodities such as vegetables. The launching of income generating activities, e.g., mushroom cultivation, commercial vegetable farming, making of potato chips, etc. resulted in instant cash income for the beneficiary communities.

The available project documents also show that household food and nutritional security has improved in the project districts. In place of their earlier food habit of taking cereal-based food with very little vegetables, they have started consuming vegetables all year round. Similarly, there is also increase in the diversity of the crops being grown by beneficiary communities in their farms and gardens. It is clearly evident from the number of types of vegetables being grown by the households. Besides, as result of utilisation of the skills they have learned from various job-oriented skill training, the level of their cash income. It is now that there is an increased tendency among the beneficiaries to increase the area under farming (vegetable crops).

Output 4: Rural micro enterprises utilizing local resources and knowledge for women and youth from poor and socially excluded, HIV/AIDS and conflict affected families established

- Dkaha weaving training

- Radhi- Pakhi training
- Woollen-Thread preparation training
- Gabion making training
- Village Animal Health Workers (VAHW) Training
- Cutting and sewing training

The project first, identified and assessed the feasibility of rural micro-enterprises based on local resources, and knowledge and skills for increased off-farm income, such as sewing/ weaving, traditional crafts, bamboo and wooden utensils/ products and so on. Then it promoted some selected micro-enterprises through community groups with focus on women and youth groups. In the process of promoting the project provided skill training, especially on skills of high market demand such as plumbing, carpentering, tailoring, electric work, radio and television repair, watch repair and so on, and create opportunity for self- employment.

With the participation in the VAHW training, some people have become aware about the fact that animals should be vaccinated timely so to reduce their mortality rate often cause due to incidence of various diseases. Besides, some participants of the VAHW training have been able to earn Rs. 4000-5000 per month. Some women participants started weaving Dhaka (cloths) and Radi-pakhi (carpet), and sold the Dhaka cloth in the local market.

Output 5: Health and sanitation necessary for a healthy and productive life of the beneficiary households/ families improved.

Before the implementation of the project, the target beneficiaries were reported to have a very poor knowledge and information about the significance of the health and sanitation aspects in their lives. Similarly, before the implementation of the project they were not aware of nutritional requirements in human diet and basic personal and household sanitation requirements. The project provided training to the communities to develop various skills and knowledge required to take care of their own health and sanitation aspects. After the training, the communities became aware about the health needs. The activities carried out are as follows

- Maternal child health training
- Smokeless stove distribution
- Nutrition awareness training
- Delivery bed distribution
- Reproductive health and awareness training

- Primary level health and sanitation training
- Health awareness street drama
- Materials support for latrine construction
- Solar panel support
- HIV/Aids awareness training
- Child cloth support program
- Stretcher support program
- MCHP training and material distribution
- Health and sanitation campaign

As a consequence of the project intervention, the communities became aware and started practicing such health related activities as boiling water, washing hands, use of toilet and other preventive measures with the knowledge and skills (through training programs) the communities acquired about maintain health and sanitation. Similarly, as a result of awareness training on health and nutrition the pregnant and breast-feeding women have started going for regular medical check-ups in the hospital and started taking nutritious diets. As the mothers now understand the significance of “*Sarbottam Pitho*” and how to make it, some of them are now making “*Sarbottam Pitho*” and giving to their children. It is also interesting to note that there is increased participation of women in health and sanitation programs in the community. It is now that after they become aware, many pregnant women have started going to hospital for giving birth to babies. In other words, they started establishing a tradition of going to hospitals for delivery purpose.

With the construction of the latrines, there is increasing use of these infrastructures resulting in the improved sanitation surrounding their houses. They have improved the health and sanitation status in the community due to increased level of awareness in preventive measures and practice in their homes and premises. The activities like general health awareness and street drama, mobile health camps, latrine construction, smokeless stove distribution, safe maternal delivery training, HIV/Aids awareness training, and child cloth support program, stretcher support, MCHP training and material distribution, health and sanitation campaign greatly contributed towards the positive transformation in community in health and sanitation status.

The material support to construct the toilets has resulted in declaration of ‘open defecation free zone’ by some VDCs. Similarly, many of the community people now have the habit of going to the toilets instead of going to the open field, forest, riverside, etc. The resulting improved

sanitation situation in the village, in turn, contributed to reduction in the incidence of water-borne diseases. The distribution of solar panel (Tukis) to the target beneficiaries has been a kind of boon, as it illuminated their houses and the surrounding. With the illumination, the children are able to study even in the night time, while the women feel quite comfortable to perform their household chores (preparation of evening meal).

Output 6: Education facilities and environments for beneficiary households/families and their children improved.

The major activities carried out to achieve this out are as follows:

- Furniture distribution to schools
- Teaching material distribution
- RB literacy class
- Child friendly School management training
- Teaching Materials support Primary schools
- Carpet support to ECD classes
- Right Based Literacy Class to the community people
- Non-formal education

The project provided teaching materials such as charts, books, stationery, etc. to all primary schools in working VDCs. With such support, the schools feel that they are better equipped for giving quality education to the students. The support of furniture to the schools also prevented the children from sitting on the damped floor; thus preventing from possible health hazards. Before the project due to lack of awareness and poverty, the communities were not giving value to education. Now they know the value of education in their practical life.

Before the project intervention, the communities were not aware about the fact that getting food for living is their rights. With the participation in the Right based literacy classes, the level of awareness among the beneficiary communities about their rights to development (food) Enhanced level of awareness among the beneficiary communities about their rights to development (food).

Before the project, the communities were not known about the value of education, or they were not bothered to be self-educated and educate their children. It is now that the increase in the awareness level has led to giving more value to education as a factor for bringing positive socio-

economic transformation in their life and community. The communities are not able to read, write and understand the printed content, e.g., newspapers, letters, etc.)

The support of teaching materials contributed to creation of enabling environment for the teachers as well as students for quality education. With the better environment in the schools such as furniture, teaching materials and extra-curricular activities, there is increase in the number of school going children. With the better learning environment in the supported school, the performance of the students in the examination also improved. This is to say that the percentage of the students passing the examination also increased. Because of the construction and/or renovating of school buildings (walls, roofs, etc.), the students are now able to attend their classes even when there is adverse weather conditions (rain, wind, hot sunshine, etc.).

Output 7: Community infrastructure facilities, providing basic services for enhanced livelihoods to the beneficiary households/ families improved.

Under this component, the CEFALS project carried out the following activities to achieve its objectives.

- Small irrigation schemes
- Drinking water scheme renovation/ construction
- Personal toilet
- Concrete and wooden bridge construction
- Suspension/wooden bridge maintenance
- School toilet support
- School building construction and renovation
- Rural road renovation
- School play ground Maintenance and construction
- Power-house roofing
- Dipping tank
- Gabion
- School Roofing Maintenance

The project provided support for the construction of various infrastructures, which mainly included: construction of community and personal toilets, small irrigations schemes, drinking water schemes, school building new construction and renovation, bridge renovation, watershed reserve maintenance, collection centers, furniture for schools, etc. In fact, SAHAS-Nepal was

not alone to support for these activities. These activities were undertaken in collaboration with various line agencies and other organizations operating in the project districts.

With the construction of irrigation schemes, the water availability for farming purposes increased. Similarly, the renovation of old irrigation schemes resulted in water efficiency (there is no leakage in the canal). Because of increase in the water availability the area under irrigated land has also increased. On the whole, the construction (including the tank irrigation) and renovation of old irrigation schemes contributed to improvement in the food security situation of the project areas. Similarly, the women household members are happier with the easy access to drinking water, which saved their time required for fetching water from distance plans. This means the availability of drinking water in their own locality has reduced the women's drudgery to a greater extent.

The construction of toilets contributed to reducing the intensity of open defecation and the project areas are moving towards declaring the areas as 'Open Defecation Free Zone'. The construction and renovations (including roofing) of school building and latrines have improved the academic environment of these schools. Similarly, the construction and maintenance of bridges has prevented people from the risks of their lives.

5. Relevance of the Project

The project is highly significant at all levels, i.e. micro: responding to the needs of the poor and marginalized; meso: District Development Committees' programmes; and macro: Nepal government's national objective of providing the food security and inclusive development.

Relevance to national development objective: The main objectives of the Three Year Plan (2010/11-2012/13) is to enable people to change in their livelihood and quality of life by supporting poverty alleviation and establishment of sustainable peace through employment centric, inclusive and equitable economic growth. Within the overall development objective, one of the objectives of agriculture sector is to enhance the food and nutritional security by increasing production and productivity of agriculture and livestock commodities in line with the requirements of the farmers. Given this context, the implementation of CEFALS project has immense relevance. The project has contributed to uplift the socio-economic status of the rural people by increasing production and productivity of agriculture and enhancing their livelihoods. 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, marginalized and excluded is very much appropriate in considering their immediate needs and the problems of the community.

Relevance to inclusive development: One of the significant aspects of the project is that it focuses mainly on the women, smallholders and poor and marginalized people, who are often excluded by the mainstream development programs. Because of implementation of CEFALS project, they have been able to access the development services available with the government and non-government development organizations in their districts. In this sense, the project intervention has responded to one of the dire 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 programs by the project is in line with the government's commitment to bring them in the mainstream development. More importantly, the implementation of the project also responds to the government's policy to provide development opportunities to the remote hilly and mountainous areas including the Karnali region by bringing them in the mainstream development.

Relevance to achieving MDGs: The project is contributing to achieving Millennium Development Goals, in particular, No. 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), Goal No. 2 (Achieve Universal primary education), No. 3 (Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, No. 4 (Reduce child mortality),

As the MTE found, the project has been very useful in terms of fulfilling not only the development needs of the communities, but also paved a path by supporting them for sustainability of their livelihoods to a considerable extent. The MTE also learned that the project as such has been endorsed by the DDCs and VDCs of the respective project districts. It was also learned that the DDCs have also rated the project as 'highly appropriate' and 'much needed' to supplement the development programs at the district level. As it appeared, the project has addressed the problems and needs of beneficiary communities through various developmental activities. From the analysis, overall, the project has been relevant not only from the macro perspectives, but also from the micro perspectives.

6. Sustainability of the Project

The implementation of the project has certainly created an amiable environment to which the stakeholders have supportive attitude. However, the project needs to think of making the project activities sustainable.

Giving continuity to the project activities demands a huge financial investment, among others. Given the stakeholders' inability to support the program in financial terms, the support organization should withdraw from the program strategically so that the communities carry out the project activities on their own. As it appeared, coordinated efforts of all stakeholders including the communities with a strong backstopping support of the project implementer for some period is indispensable for the attainment of the overall objective of the project.

For sustainability, the integrated package of services including finance, technology, inputs, and linking the products of the farming communities with marketing are required. Besides, the hard core poor need to be given more attention and support for a longer period.

Institutional sustainability of the CBOs being created by the project has serious bearing on the sustainability of the project. This is because after the project has been phased out, there is a possibility of weakening or breaking up these CBOs in the absence of external support. In considering this fact, the project should pay more attention for strengthening these CBOs not only for undertaking the project activities but also institutionally.

7. Success Factors of the Project

There are various factors contributing to the success of this project. The key factors that have implications for future undertaking of the project in the remaining period, and phase II of the project are described as follows.

- **Targeting and selection of the beneficiaries:** The careful selection of the beneficiaries (the women, poor and disadvantaged groups) who are really looking forward for some development opportunities for improving the quality of their life (e.g., through increased food and nutrition security). Given the limitation of the project in terms of its resources, it is genuinely appropriate for the land-poor, small holders and marginalized farmers, who somehow do not have access to development services and cannot afford for large scale income generating enterprises.
- **Local capacity building:** Capacity building of the beneficiaries through knowledge, skill, inputs, etc., and of project staffs and their mobilization has contributed to successful implementation of the project.
- **Beneficiaries' Genuine participation and Ownership:** Participation of the communities in the project activities is one of the key factors responsible for the success of the project implementation. It is in fact the commitment and hardworking of the communities together with their mobilization to undertake the project activities contributed to keep the project alive and give continuity to it.
- **Integrated approach:** The integrated approach combining basic and essential components such as production inputs such as seeds, materials for arranging irrigation water supply, etc., technical skills training and collaboration and coordination with other stakeholders (District level line agencies, local governments, NGOs. etc.) have been very much appropriate for the effective implementation of the project activities.
- **Cost-effective and low risk:** There are no sophisticated technologies and risks involved in the implementation process of the project. The cost of production (labour, inputs, materials etc.) is within the affordability of the project implementers including the stakeholders and the target beneficiaries.

- **Social acceptance:** In general, irrespective of the caste/ethnicity and class, has been accepted by the communities as being very appropriate for meeting their development needs. The communities (both participants and non-participants) in the project districts have positive attitude towards the project. Organization's transparency and accountability in the project implementation process are also the reasons for the social acceptance of the project.
- **Quick Incentive to the households:** There has been some level of increase in household food and nutrition security besides the cash income for some project beneficiaries; a form of positive and quick incentive. This is one of the major reasons attributable to the success of the project.
- **Recruitment of local staffs:** The recruitment of local people as staff for project has eased for the implementation of project activities to reach out to the communities. Because of the local people on the staff of the project, there is a very good working relationship between the project management and the local communities.
- **Resource sharing approach:** CEFALS project has been implemented on resource sharing basis with other stakeholders such as local governments (DDCs/VDCs), district level sectoral line agencies and other development agencies (I/NGO) operating in the project districts. This approach has been applauded by the stakeholders, as it contributed to creating synergies among them to engage in the development activities more efficiently and effectively, while also avoiding the duplication and overlaps of the project activities.

8. Issues/Problems related to Project Implementation

The project has been successfully moving towards the target groups in terms of directing the services to be delivered in bringing favorable socioeconomic changes in them. Over all, the performance is highly satisfactory. However, the MTE observed some issues and problems related to project implementation. While some of them are longer-term in nature the others are short-term in nature. Therefore, the MTE feels that the performance of the project could still be improved by handling the project activities carefully and strategically, and dealing with the local problems. The issues/problems are as follows.

8.1 Difficult work situation

The MTE noted the difficulties encountered by the project mainly during the implementation process due to the remoteness and difficult terrain in the project districts. These problems resulted in delay in implementation of the project activities at the field level. For example, the materials such as educational materials, apple saplings and sewing machines could not be made available at the time of need (at the time of project activity launching).

8.2 Inadequate utilization of the project created facilities and skills

The project provided the communities with various educational and skill development training, and inputs (materials). However, a few of them were not fully utilizing such facilities and skills. For example, they are not using the project-supported toilets due to the belief (religious), lack of knowledge about spread of diseases, and lack of adequate water.

8.3 Extent of community contribution

There is no uniformity on the part of the communities in terms of their interest and affordability to contribute to the project intervention (especially in infrastructure construction). Unwillingness or hesitation on the part of some target communities to cooperate or participate in the project activities have been reported as one of the problems being encountered by the project's field staffs. In some cases the communities were found to be unwilling to contribute their physical labor, as they need to meet their own household expenses by working each day. Similarly, some beneficiaries also placed demands in the middle of the implementation for more or different activities than what were identified as their needs. Consideration is needed in such circumstances.

8.4 Lack of market linkage

Some farmers (project beneficiaries) have come up with complaints regarding marketing problem of their farm produce due to geo-physical condition of the target VDCs and transportation facilities. There exists a gap between the farm produce and marketing.

8.5 Lack of skilled human resources

The project sometimes faces problems related to availability of skilled persons like masons, carpenters, plumbers, etc. mainly for construction of infrastructure activities, and raw material at the local level.

8.6 Subsidy mentality of the community people

The community peoples have a high level of expectation from the project. They have the feeling that the project is responsible to fulfill their needs (such as seed, tools, money, and other materials). For example, the farmers ask the project staffs for seeds again for the next season rather than they manage or buy by themselves. This factor is somehow hindering or delaying the smooth implementation of the project activities at the community level.

8.7 Inadequacy of competencies

Besides the above-mentioned aspects, the field based project staffs have the feeling that the skills and competencies they have become inadequate to work efficiently and effectively. This is because of the nature and objective of the project, the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiary communities. They are of the view that they also need to strengthen their capacities to fit to the project's nature and demand. The skills/capacities they require include: monitoring of the project activities, report writing, training of trainers, etc.

8.8 Difficulty in Supervision and Monitoring

Because of high volume of work (project activities per year) in geographically difficult areas, monitoring of the field-level activities regularly has not been a difficult task for the staffs. Because of the similar reason (cancellation of flights, road blockade, landslides, difficult physical accessibility to the project areas, etc.), the monitoring of the project from the management of SAHAS-Nepal has not been possible as per the plan. In considering this aspect, the project might need to explore alternative options for monitoring by the SAHAS-Nepal management.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

9.1 Conclusion

The MTE is highly impressed with the project performance of the project activities and the effects it has produced on the beneficiary communities and in the project areas. On the whole, the planned activities for social and economic empowerment, community health and sanitation, rural infrastructure and institutional development have been realized, despite the limitations and difficulties (geophysical difficulties and remoteness of the project areas) encountered during the implementation in some cases.

The project focused its attention on the poor, marginalized and excluded people. The extent of participation of women, dalit and janjatis in the project activities is very appreciable. The available information shows that the project has been successful in bringing about substantial positive changes in the livelihood and food security situation of the communities in the project areas. The project has also initiated confidence among the community people that development is possible if the efforts are made collectively and if resources are correctly directed towards it. People, in general, felt that the project has contributed in improving the quality of their life.

The coordination and collaboration of SAHAS/CEFALS with other stakeholders (local government, line agencies and other NGOs operating in the project districts) is highly commendable, which led to creation of synergies for accomplishing bigger activities. This spirit should be maintained for the next phase as well not only for the project period, but also it contributes to sustainability of the project.

9.2 Recommendations

The mid-term evaluation study has come out with some commendations that have implications for the on-going as well the upcoming phase of the project. They are as follows.

As the project is in the process of its implementation, there are many activities that are still to be accomplished within this phase. Given the nature and volume of the work still to be undertaken, SAHAS may not be in a position to accomplish the remaining activities within the already agreed time-frame. In the remaining part of the project period, in view of the time shortage to take up infrastructural works, it is recommended to focus more on livelihood creation, income generating activities and software aspects that will promote skill development in the communities, and contribute to sustainability of the project.

SAHAS/CEFALS is suggested to work more intensively keeping in view the remaining activities to be undertaken in geographically difficult areas with its limited staffs to achieve the objectives of Phase II of the project within the stipulated time. Furthermore, as various internal and external factors appeared to be responsible for hindering the project activities, there is a need to work out potential risks, likely hurdles and corresponding mitigation strategies not only for this phase but also for the upcoming phase of the project.

As it appears from the project-related documents, and the interaction with SAHAS's staffs, they are committed and sincere toward the achievement of the project goal and the cause of the people. By and large, the field level project staffs have acquired the basic and essential technical and social skills required to the project activities. However, as it appeared from the inquiry with the staffs working at the field level that they need strengthening their skills. They expressed the need for further strengthening of their technical capabilities so that they could better perform their duties in assisting the communities. In view of the difficulties they faced during the project implementation and working with the beneficiary groups, the project's field level staffs working in various districts realized the need for building/strengthening the skill related to the following aspects: (i) Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, (ii) Technical knowledge and skills related to agriculture (especially home garden), (iii) Group facilitation, (iv) Negotiation skills to deal with various categories of communities and officials (v) Report writing (for writing field monitoring and progress reports). SAHAS-Nepal should ensure that the field staffs are well capacitated to undertake the project activities confidently. It is, therefore, recommended that SAHAS/CEFALS may give some more emphasis on the capacity strengthening of its field level staffs.

While a number of groups have been formed in the project areas, they were found to be still weak in terms of organizational management. Therefore, the capabilities of these groups should be further strengthened so that they do analysis of their own problems and providing solutions. More importantly, as the long-term sustainability of the groups can be achieved through the support of the local governments, and government line agencies, and civil society organizations in the district, the SAHAS-Nepal should help these groups to seek the support of these institutions.

One of the critical elements of the SAHAS-Nepal's approach is constant supervision and monitoring by its central level as well as field level staffs. However, this aspect appears to be weakening in the later stage of this phase of the project. SAHAS/CEFALS also needs to have a

strong monitoring mechanism to facilitate and accelerate the implementation process effectively and efficiently. Monitoring of the project should be taken as a continuous process and feedback must be generated for making corrections and better planning the activities until the project is completely phased out.

As institutional sustainability of the CBOs is important for the long-term sustainability of the project, there is a need to strengthening these CBOs institutionally by organizing some more institutional development training (focusing on leadership development, financial and administrative matters, resource accessing, etc.). Besides, the project may initiate the process of linking these CBOs with the local governments and line agencies so that they can operate on their own without the support from external sources in the long run.

ANNEXES

Annex I: List of the Workshop Participants

Sr. No.	Name of the participant	Designation
1	JayshworMahato	Project officer- Mugu
2	YogendraKarki	Project Officer – Kalikot
3	Naba Raj Sanjyal	Team Leader- kalikot
4	SurajKumariShahi	ANM
5	Man BahadurSejuwal	JTA
6	SantoshMalla	Team Leader – Mugu
7	Basu Dev Rawat	JTA
8	Gyamjo Lama	JTA
9	PanchaBahadurRawat	Infrastructure Technician
10	Kamala Hitan	ANM
11	KomalDahal	Project Officer - Bajura
12	Ram BahadurKarki	Team Leader – Bajura
13	Ganga BikramKarki	Technician
14	PurnaBahadurBishwokarma	JTA
15	AishwaryaKumari Singh	ANM
16	Nirip Raj Giri	JTA
17	SabanShrestha	Programme Coordinator
18	Dr Surendra K. Shrestha	Executive Director

Annex II: Photographs during Mid – Term evaluation



Presentation session



Training session



Training session



Necessary Information taken from the villagers