Healing Livelihoods
Success stories collection

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HEAL-Nepal centers on preserving livelihood assets by restoring disrupted livestock and veterinary services systems in five of the 14 districts most heavily impacted by the April/May 2015 earthquakes. The project renders immediately needed services and creates a favorable, enabling environment at the district, village development committee (VDC), and community levels for continued livestock sector recovery. The interventions are specific and oriented around the principles of the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) with a programmatic focus on immediate relief measures for safeguarding livestock assets and ensuring their continued productivity.

HEAL-Nepal works in 90 VDCs of five districts: Sindhupalchowk, Kavre, Nuwakot, Dhading and Gorkha, all of which sustained heavy losses.

Over the past 120 days, the project has directly supported 15,145 smallholder families to maintain healthy livelihoods by restoring disrupted livestock service systems and protecting valuable livestock assets for revival of rural household economic activities and market linkage.

- 251 animal health service providers trained and mobilized
- 130 breeding bulls and 43 pairs of oxen restocked
- 1,350 transitional livestock shelters built providing shelter to 6,468 animals
- Approx. 65,000 animals treated at 50 animal health camps
- About 5,600 kg of fodder seeds and 654,000 saplings planted
- More than 29,425 animals treated through door to door treatment services
- 5,758 farmers trained on improved shelter, feeding practice, health care, Sanitation & Hygiene
- 1,125 Project Implementation and Monitoring Committee (PIMC) Members trained in Heifer’s Cornerstones for sustainability of the intervention

The stories presented in this booklet show the achievements the project has gained in its short time span of 120 days. These are the examples of how the project has benefitted livestock and the livelihood of communities to move towards "building back better". The people featured in the stories are representatives of the large number of beneficiaries the project is able to reach.
Masini builds temporary livestock shelter (TLS) to rebuild her livelihood

In the aftermath of the Nepal Earthquake, the urgent need for shelters was apparent. As people were struggling to find shelter for themselves and their families, they were forced to leave their livestock out in the open, exposing them to extreme weather – hot days and cold nights – increasing their vulnerability to diseases and infections. To protect smallholder farmers from further losses, HEAL-Nepal supported farmers in the construction of 1,350 model temporary livestock shelters (TLS). The TLSs can be constructed with low investment using locally available materials, are resistant to seismic activities and have been approved by Department of Livestock Services.

Masini Waiba from Fataksila, Sindhupalchowk district, is one of the farmers who received the support from HEAL-Nepal in construction of the model TLS. She lost her house during the earthquake which also destroyed her goat shed, which was built adjacent to the house, a common practice in Nepal. In the following days, she tied her goats out in the open. As a result her flock started suffering from diarrhea and the common cold while two of her goats died from pneumonia. After building the TLS she shares, “I am grateful that the project helped me in construction of this improved shed. The vet doctors were in here to provide health services to the rest of the animals and oversee shed construction. Now I understand that we need to construct animals’ shelter far from our houses. My goats are also recovering now.”

Gayatri Nepal, along with other farmers from the community, has also constructed TLSs following the instructions of veterinary officers from HEAL-Nepal after seeing Masini’s progress. Gayatri shares, “After the earthquake, I cannot afford any additional losses. So after seeing that Masini’s goats were getting better so quickly, I decided to construct one as well. This is a good investment as even if we have big aftershocks I don’t need to worry about losing more of my goats.”

Sarala Nepal, another neighbor who has built TLS similar to that of Masini’s cheerfully shared, “Constructing the TLS has been a boon for me and my family. This October I will be selling three meat goats that will bring at least NPR 40,000 (USD approx. 400). This will be enough to celebrate Dashain and Tihar –our two major festivals.”

The HEAL project has constructed 1,350 temporary livestock sheds. As per the crude estimation from the interview with project beneficiaries, a goat shed can provide benefit of NPR 20,000 (USD 200) per household per annum and a dairy animal shed can provide up to NPR 40,000 (USD 400) per household per annum. Moreover, farmers can protect their livestock assets through these sheds.
When the massive earthquake hit Nepal, millions of livestock were severely injured. With animal shelters destroyed and livestock services disrupted, injured livestock continued to suffer, resulting in decreasing productivity. This meant farmers like Laxmi Shrestha whose family depends on income from sale of milk from her dairy buffalo were more prone to food insecurity and loss of income.

During the earthquake Laxmi’s house crumbled, destroying her livestock shed adjacent to it. For the next few days as the aftershocks continued, she tied them up out in the open while eventually retrieving woods and corrugated tin roofing from her fallen house to build a temporary shelter for her buffalo and its calf. In absence of proper shelter, Laxmi’s buffalo suffered from a cold due to exposure to extreme weather—hot during the day and cold during night time and parasite infestation. She shared, “I think the harsh sunlight has dried up her milk.”

To help farmers avoid further losses due to injured livestock and its decreasing productivity, HEAL–Nepal organized 50 free animal health service camps in its project areas where 65,318 animals from 10,902 household were treated. Thousands of farmers like Laxmi brought their animals to be checked by veterinary doctors. Laxmi says, “The doctors found it infested with worms and have given me deworming medicines along with some vitamins so it can get stronger.” She is happy that her buffalo will soon recover and will be producing milk like before.
Tika Bahadur finds relief in his pair of oxen

Tika Bahadur Sapkota, 53, of Shikherpur, Sindhupalchok lost eight goats, one buffalo, one calf and a pair of oxen, worth NPR 300,000 (approx. USD 3,000) in total. He painfully shares, “I was completely devastated. How was I going to plough my field without my oxen? This means loss of yield and no food for my family.”

In Nepal, smallholder farmers still practice a traditional farming system due to which loss of draft animals can mean loss of agricultural output as they cannot till their land.

HEAL-Nepal supported victim families in its project areas by restocking 43 pairs of oxen benefitting 210 household as a relief effort to rapidly assist with crop production. Tika Bahadur was one of those farmers who received the support. He found a sense of confidence and relief with this support as with the pair of oxen he can go back to rebuilding his life. He shares, “I didn’t have enough money to purchase a pair of oxen. I am grateful to have received this support. Since the monsoon is here I plan to immediately start planting paddy.” A pair of oxen benefits at least five families in a community. A pair of oxen will generate direct income to a farmer like Tika Bahadur while there is a benefit of indirect income of about NPR 1,200 (USD 12) per work day by lending the animals to neighbors to plough their farms.

These draft animals have assured the winter season crop plantation, thus improving food security for the next year. Hence, by providing draft animals, HEAL-Nepal is helping to check food insecurity and ensure self-reliance in the long run.
Restocking breeding bulls for economic stability

The majority of farmers in rural Nepal practice traditional agricultural and livestock raising as they do not have access to modern techniques such as artificial insemination. Therefore, loss of breeding animals during the earthquake means long term implications for livestock farmers like those experienced by Bidur Ghorasaini and Mohan Ghorasaini from Sindhupalchok.

Before the earthquake, Bidur owned a healthy buffalo bull worth NPR 90,000 (USD900). He earned around NPR 10,000 (USD 100) monthly from its breeding service which was used by 150 farmers in his village. When the earthquake struck, its livestock shed collapsed, burying his bull underneath it. This meant loss of income for Bidur and the other 150 farmers receiving its service.

A month after the quake when aftershocks were still frequent, Mohan Ghorasaini walked his dairy buffalo to another village 25 km uphill to breed it as the breeding bull in his village was killed in the earthquake. If the bull is not healthy or has genetic demerit, it means the offspring will not be healthy resulting in decreased productivity in subsequent generations and further loss for Mohan.

Therefore, in the post-disaster scenario, it is essential to restock healthy breeding animals to maintain production and productivity level for long term economic stability. HEAL-Nepal placed Murrah cross-bred buffalo bulls in 130 households in its project areas. Bidur was one of the farmers who received a buffalo bull. He shares, “It would have taken me at least a year’s earning to buy another bull. Receiving this bull has come as a great relief to my family and community as now I have a stable source of income and breeding service is available to my neighbors.” For farmers like Mohan, this means not only easy access to livestock breeding services but also quality assurance.

Mr. Mohan Basnet, project technician, shares, “The breeding bulls we have provided to the farmers are of improved breed, so their offspring are going to be healthy and highly productive which will give increased milk and meat production. This will help our farmers to quickly recover from the earthquake’s devastation.” A local buffalo yields about 800 liters of milk per lactation while Murrah cross-bred yields 1,100 liters of milk per lactation; there is a direct incremental benefit of 300 liters per lactation with no significant cost added for production. If a breeding bull serves 100 buffalo per annum and 50 female calves are born, then in three to four years’ time, 130 breeding bulls can give up to NPR. 97 million (USD 970,000) additional income through improved breed intervention.
In the days following the earthquake, Ram Bahadur Tamang could not access veterinary services as local agro-vet shops and service providers suffered damages as well. For Ram this meant loss of income as his dairy buffalo had stopped giving milk after the disaster. To help the farmers protect valuable livelihood assets for revival of rural household economy, HEAL-Nepal mobilized Community Agro-vet Entrepreneurs (CAVEs).

Chet Prasad Ghorasaini, 28, is a local youth who has been working as a CAVE in Fataksila village, Sindhupalchowk under HEAL-Nepal. He regularly visits farmers’ houses to check up on animals’ health and provides medicines when needed. He also organizes meetings with farmers where they discuss various measures and techniques they can adopt to ensure good health for their animals, and he informs them about the free animal health camps that are regularly organized by the project. He shares, “Providing health services to livestock immediately after the disaster was very important to help them recover from injuries and shock to increase their productivity.”

The project has trained and mobilized a total of 176 CAVEs, two for each VDC in the 90 VDCs it is working in. These CAVEs are ensuring that farmers practice improved animal management practices and bio-security measures to protect the health of both livestock and its owners. Madhab Acharya, CAVE from Melamchi, Sindhupalchok shares, “Consuming milk and meat from unhealthy animals can transfer disease to humans as well. So, it is important to ensure animals are healthy. To maintain animals’ good health, frequent check-up, balance diet, proper maintenance of shelter, timely vaccination and required quantity of vitamin and mineral should be provided.”

Ram shares, “My buffaloes are getting better now. CAVEs regularly visit our community and I have been consulting with them and giving medicines to my cattle as per their advice. They have been giving milk just like before the earthquake. I am grateful to the local doctors who have helped me take care of my livestock at a time of such crisis.” He hopes to be able to quickly recover from losses of the earthquake by building a strong livelihood.

The HEAL project has successfully developed a network between District Livestock Service Office (DLSO) and CAVEs in five project districts. On the other end, CAVEs have developed a trustful relationship with farmers in their community. They will continue to provide primary health care services, playing a role of private service providers who provide services on a payment basis to the farmers after the completion of the project.
Helping livestock farmers to build back better with improved animal management practices

Bishnu Prasad Rimal from Khadga Vanjyang, Nuwakot attended the farmers’ orientation program organized by HEAL-Nepal. As he hailed from a remote village, this was the first time Bishnu was learning about improved practices that could help him increase his animal’s productivity. He shares, “I have learned that by simply planting fodder and forages in fallow land, I can not only increase my livestock’s productivity but also save up to NPR 50,000 annually (approx. USD 500) on purchase of hay which isn’t even nutritious.”

From the project, Bishnu also received fodder/forage sapling and seeds which he has already planted in his risers, bunds and fallow land. Now, he can also recognize which local fodders are nutritious and which ones need to be avoided as some wild grasses can be poisonous. Bishnu has also started to supplement his livestock feed with mineral blocks which he makes from locally available resources such as egg shells, salt and red mud. These mineral blocks provide essential minerals making the animals healthy and more productive.

The project has trained 5,758 farmers on improved animal management practices such as proper housing, feed and nutrition and timely medication to help victim families build back better in livestock sub-sector. Farmers are also given fodder/forage seeds and saplings along with regular monitoring from veterinary service providers to supplement the knowledge they have received from the training.

By applying improved animal management practices, farmers like Bishnu have a better chance of rebuilding their livelihoods for quick recovery from the impact of the earthquake.
Educating smallholder farmers in post disaster scenario through community FM stations

Each morning Hasta Bahadur Tamang from Chisapani, Dhading district turns on his radio to listen to news. “In a remote place like this, radio is the only way of updating yourself of current affairs.” In Nepal, difficult terrain, poor communication infrastructures and high illiteracy rate makes community radio stations an effective means of communication.

In the days following the massive Nepal Earthquake and its frequent aftershocks, it was critical to reach out to the masses with information to promote better management of livestock in post disaster scenario to avoid further losses of livestock assets and quick recovery of livelihoods. Therefore, HEAL-Nepal project partnered with community-based FM stations and reached 210,000 smallholder farmers with information on bio-security measures, reconstruction of temporary livestock shelters and scientific feed systems in its five project districts.

Hasta found the messages aired on radio very useful. “Since the disaster, we had been living under a temporary shelter which was very close to the buffalo shed. Only after listening to the messages in FM, I learned how even a small infection in my buffalo’s udder could be contagious and could harm my family and my livelihood. I immediately took my buffalo to the free animal health service camp the project organized in our village where my buffalo got checked by a veterinary doctor and provided some medicines. Now it has completely healed and is producing milk again.” Hasta is relived that he was able to avoid potential disaster. He continues to follow instructions on improved animal management aired on the radio to ensure that he can avoid further losses.

Important messages on the proper method of disposing livestock carcasses, precautions needed to avoid transfer of diseases from animal to animal and animal to human, and techniques to restore livestock productivity through improved feed, improved shed and animal health were broadcasted to increase public awareness. These messages were broadcasted from one national and five local FM stations reaching out to about families in five project districts.
Mangal Majhi finds confidence to rebuild his livelihood with HEAL-Nepal

Mangal Majhi, 52, from Bansbari, Sindhupalchok district, recalls his experience of surviving the horrific earthquake, “I was at home with my wife and daughter when the earth beneath us started shaking. We hurried outside into the open and saw our house crumble to the ground. In that single moment I lost everything I had worked so hard to earn.”

Mangal is a smallholder farmer and livestock is an integral part of his livelihood. He raises goats to support his family of four—himself, his wife, a son and a daughter. So when the earthquake destroyed his livestock shelter he was devastated. Besides worrying about how to feed his family and provide them shelter, Mangal was also constantly concerned about his goats. Mangal lost 4 nanny goats due to give birth in June same year, 3 breeding bucks and 2 meat goats. This cost him a loss of NPR 180,000 (USD 1,800) along with future income from the nanny goats. He had 19 goats remaining with him which he tied out in the open due to lack of proper shelter.

With HEAL-Nepal Mangal found the belief that life could go back to normal again. Mangal received support from the project to build an improved goat shed that is resistant to seismic activity and provides a healthy living space for the animals. “With help from the project, I have built this strong shed that will keep my goats protected. Knowing this, I can sleep soundly at night.” His goats are now enjoying their new shelter which is clean, dry and spacious.

Mangal has also been applying important lessons he received during an orientation program organized by HEAL-Nepal which was aimed at teaching farmers improved goat raising techniques. He has planted nutritious fodder/forage in his farm and prepares mineral blocks as supplements from locally available resources. “I have been highly engaged with the project in many productive ways. I am also starting to see the progress in my goats. This has built up my confidence level and I am on target to earn about NPR 250,000 (approx. USD 2,500) this year. I am happy to be part of the project as it has helped me to recover from the earthquake, mentally and financially.”

HEAL-Nepal worked with 60,000 people like Mangal to help them rebuild their livelihoods after the earthquake.
Preparing veterinary service providers for future emergencies

Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) are a set of international guidelines and standards designed to protect and rebuild livestock assets of crisis affected communities. It aims at saving both lives and livelihoods by identifying the most appropriate livestock interventions in different emergencies and providing guidance interventions based on good practices.

HEAL-Nepal project trained 251 veterinary service providers with LEGS training to build their capacity to meet the needs of livestock farmers affected by the earthquake and help them be better prepared for future emergencies. Dr. Bibek Ghimire, Vet Officer for the project is one of the recipients of the training. He shares, “The training helped me prioritize our emergency response as per its urgency. I have five technicians and 20 CAVEs working under me in Kavre district. Together we worked to address needs for proper shelter, restocking and destocking, medical care and feed and fodder which are the foundation of LEGS.”

Dr. Bibek adds, “I feel better prepared now. I understand that it is equally important to provide relief to livestock as farmers depend on them for recovery from such disasters. There have been cases where breeding animals have suffered shocks and injuries resulting in decreased productivity. If farmers continue to breed their animals with such unhealthy ones then they will continue to suffer losses in the long run. It is important to cull such animals and restock them with healthy ones. There are numerous such cases we tend to overlook, but by receiving LEGS training we have been able to focus on such issues.”

By training government and independent veterinary service providers, HEAL-Nepal aims to build their capacity so that they are better prepared to provide livestock services in future emergencies. The project’s interventions are oriented around the LEGS principles with a programmatic focus on immediate relief measures for safeguarding livestock assets and ensuring their continued productivity.
HEAL-Nepal and District Livestock Service Offices (DLSOs) partnership creates momentum for sustainability

Providing relief to a large number of livestock farmers affected by the earthquake posed an immense challenge to the District Livestock Service Office (DLSO) in Sindhupalchok. Due to an unprecedented scale of the disaster and its resulting need for assistance, the local government unit was overwhelmed by requests for recovery and relief assistance. The situation was similar in all five of HEAL project districts.

By collaborating with DLSO, HEAL project helped to pool available resources together and channel them towards the victims in an organized manner. DLSO Sub-centers at Village Development Committee (VDC) level were established as a focal point where the HEAL team worked with government technicians to organize animal service health camps, and breeding bull and oxen restocking programs. Dr. Ishab Poudel, Vet Officer for HEAL shares, “We received immense support from DLSO. They provided us with equipment while we pooled our medicines together for health camps. We were able to achieve a great deal as we worked together as a team even under very difficult circumstances.”

The partnership has also helped vet service providers at community level to connect and extend their network with DLSO. Kalpana Giri, Community Agro-vet Entrepreneur (CAVE) shares, “Although I had been working as an animal health worker for few years now, I only learned about the government’s requirement to take a license from DLSO after working for HEAL. Now I am a certified CAVE.” Kalpana has also started regularly consulting with government technicians to build her own capacity and she is now better informed about various trainings and services the DLSO provides to community animal health workers like herself. The project has helped to connect CAVEs with local government bodies and their technicians which will help them to extend their network and continue building their capacity.

Through formation of Project Implementation and Monitoring Committee (PIMC), HEAL project is promoting the practice of monitoring farmers’ progress achieved from the project and other government programs. The committee is comprised of representatives of farmers, cooperatives, women’s groups and is chaired by the VDC secretary. Once in every two weeks, the committee comes together to monitor and review the project’s progress. Damodar Dhakal, an influential person in his community works as a teacher and a farmer and is also a member of PIMC. He plans to give continuity to the practice of monitoring which ensures that farmers’ problems are being heard and also motivates them to work harder.

Shiv Bahadur K.C, Chief of DLSO, Sindhupalchowk shares, “The program was crucial in bringing together all stakeholders and moving ahead with a better understanding of immediate needs of farmers and how to address them.” The chief has been an avid supporter of the project and has shown commitment towards continuing with momentum achieved by the project.
HEAL-Nepal Achievement

- 15,145 Families served
- 95,676 Animals treated
- 5,758 Farmers trained
- 1,350 Temporary livestock shelter built
- 251 Vet service providers trained on LEGS
- 216 Oxen and breeding bull restocked
- 210,000 Individuals reached with PSA
- 15 District level coordination meeting
- 180 Village development level coordination meeting
- 176 Number of Community Agro-vet Entrepreneurs mobilized
- 55,000 Number of posters distributed
Heifer International’s mission is to end hunger and poverty while caring for the Earth. For 70 years, Heifer International has provided livestock and environmentally sound agricultural training to improve the lives of those who struggle daily for reliable sources of food and income. Heifer is currently working in more than 30 countries, including the United States, to help families and communities become self-reliant.