Dear friends,

I present to you the June-December 2018 edition of our newsletter, which show cases the news and updates from this period.

Heifer has inaugurated the much awaited “Banke Goat Business Center” in Dhakeri. Established with financial and technical support of Heifer International Nepal, the business center’s main objective is to ensure a market for smallholder farmers through collective goat marketing to urban markets (especially Pokhara and Kathmandu) to strengthen and operationalize the Social Entrepreneurs Women’s Cooperative District Union, Banke.

This year too we have been part of various symposiums such as International Poultry Symposium and 6th Annual Agriculture to Nutrition symposium followed by Asian Regional Conference on Goats, which has been a great learning opportunity for us. Heifer has also developed Virtual Collection Center (VCC), and Ration Balancing mobile apps, which gives the detail of the number of saleable goats around a certain vicinity and allows for smallholder farmers to pre-set a selling price and reduces the hassle in price negotiation and to better calculate the quantity of feed and fodder/forage required for dairy animals.

This year too our young donor Justin Chang visited Kathmandu to hand over the cheque of the donation amount raised by the students of Seoul International School, South Korea. Justin continues to give us further motivation to continue our work in this sector.

I hope this issue will be an interesting and insightful read to all. To learn more about our work, please find us on Facebook, YouTube and our website.

Thank You.

Dr. Shubh N. Mahato
Country Director

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

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Heifer Nepal and Partners to Provide Credit Services

Heifer Nepal, Machhapuchchhre Bank Limited (MBL) and UKaid Sakchyam Access to Finance Programme (Sakchyam) signed a partnership to provide simplified microcredit services to the unserved and underserved population of 14 districts across Nepal. Representatives from each organization attended the ceremony including, Senior Vice President of Programs Dr. Mahendra Lohani, Country Director for Heifer Nepal Dr. Shubh Mahato, CEO of MBL Mr. Suman Sharma, and Sakchyam Team Leader Mr. Nirmal Dahal.

Through the “Simplified Financial Services for Economic Empowerment of Women” project funded by UKaid Sakchyam, this partnership will expand access to finance for women entrepreneurs’ and farmers to enhance their economic condition. The aim of the project is to provide credit services to more than 4,300 farmers, open saving accounts of more than 3,000 beneficiaries, initiate financial literacy and awareness, maximize Branchless Banking (BLB) and introduce innovative credit assessment and delivery tools in form of Kishan Credit Card (KCC).

The CEO of MBL, Suman Sharma said, “Through this strategic alliance, the bank will cater to the financial requirements of rural farmers, small and medium enterprises, other value chain actors and underprivileged group in 14 districts in order to enhance their livelihood.”

Sakchyam Team leader Mr. Nirmal Dahal highlighted the important role of Heifer and the bank in achieving the project goal. He said, “MBL provides cooperatives with the loan, but these cooperatives need technical capacity where Heifer’s role comes. Heifer has the required expertise working with value chain actors and at the front line with the beneficiaries. This expertise will play a role in this project. And Sakchyam will facilitate from the backside. This is a perfect partnership and I am confident about its success.”

Sr. Vice President of Heifer International Dr. Mahendra Lohani shared his commitment to work hand in hand together with MBL and Sakchyam to expand access to financial services to small-scale farmers in most rural parts of Nepal. He said, “I am hopeful that this partnership project will help in improving the livelihood of farmers, bring revolution in the agri-enterprise sector, and contribute to economic development of the country.”

Ganga Gharti, a member of the Karmath Social Entrepreneur Women’s Cooperative, shared her experience with access to loans from the bank facilitated by Heifer, which changed her life from a dependent housewife to an empowered entrepreneur. Gharti said, “My economic condition was very poor and my husband used to work in India to make a living which was not enough for even basic needs. As I got involved in the cooperative, I began goat farming with a loan from MBL. I have 80 goats on my farm now. I sold 18 meat goats this year and earned an income of NPR. 250,000 ($2,500 USD). I used this income to renovate my house, educate my children and meet dairy needs. Now my husband has also joined me in goat enterprise, and we are working together. I have future plans to add more does and expand the business.” There are 890 members in the Karmath cooperative and among them 32 women like Ganga who have turned into goat entrepreneurs through easy access to financial services.
Goat Abattoir in Public-Private-Producer-Partnership Model

With Heifer’s support and mediation, community leaders in Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City, agreed to start operating the first modern goat abattoir in the Himalayan nation’s fifth province. A disagreement between the Sub-Metropolitan City and the Meat Entrepreneurs Association had left the abattoir non-operational since its construction three year ago. Heifer Nepal brought the sides together, along with government representatives, private businesses and farmers’ institutions, to solve the issues. An inclusive committee on Abattoir Construction and Execution has been made, which will oversee completing construction of internal structures to make the facility operational as soon as possible. The committee is co-chaired by the Mayor of Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City and the President of Meat Entrepreneurs Association (MEA).

The Abattoir Construction and Execution Committee aims to start operating the abattoir within a year once the animal holding yard and waste management facilities are constructed, and processing machines are installed. Using the Public-Private-Producer-Partnership (PPPP) model, the Sub-Metropolitan City has committed US$80,000 to complete the construction. The MEA, private businesses and producers’ cooperatives have also committed to providing financial support.

According to the Meat Entrepreneurs Association. Nearly 2,500 animals are slaughtered daily in an unhygienic way, which has direct health implication for consumers. In the absence of a modern abattoir, consumers have no option but to eat meat from an unhygienic facility. Local hotels and restaurants import packaged meat due to unavailability of good quality meat in Nepal. The modern abattoir is expected to address these problems, as well as help promote farming enterprises by providing a secure market to the small-scale producers.

Young Donors prove giving back has no age limit.

Our young donors (Elementary School students) from Seoul International School, South Korea have once again proven that age is not a limiting factor when it comes to giving back to the society. Generously they have been raising funds to support the Girl Child Education Program started by the local initiation of Heifer Nepal staff. This program provides scholarship and educational materials to girl child who are in desperate need and encourages them to finish their schooling.

Justin Chang, who started this fund-raising initiative, along with his mom and friends travelled to Nepal to hand over the cheque. In 2017, Heifer has successfully supported 152 girl children across 16 districts and hope to further this in the years to come. We also owe special thanks to Justin, who is 18 now and has been regularly raising funds to support Heifer ever since he was in the 4th grade. The girl child education is an initiative of Heifer staff which provides materials to needy girl child in different regions of Nepal. Often, the lack of materials and supplies bars girl students from receiving much needed education. One at a time, Heifer hopes to make an impact on as many children as possible.
Dairy is an important livestock subsector, as it provides employment and generates income opportunities for thousands of farmers and ensures the flow of money from urban to rural sectors. In many rural areas of Nepal, the productivity of dairy animals is generally low. The most critical factor is inadequate and unbalanced feeding, partly due to lack of adequate knowledge among farmers.

To solve this problem, Heifer Nepal, supported by USAID Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems, developed a pilot program for a feeding support mobile app for small-scale farms in three western districts. With the help of this user-friendly app, farmers can better calculate the quantity of feed and fodder/forage required for their dairy animals. The project promoted locally available feed resources at the minimum possible cost to meet the major nutrients required to sustain the level of production.

The app aims to reduce production costs, and increase milk production and farmers’ incomes to improve their livelihoods. Throughout the intervention areas, farmers have reported an increase in milk production of up to 15 percent per day, contributing to the national initiative to make the country self-sufficient in dairy. The government of Nepal has taken ownership of the Ration Balancing Mobile App after seeing the app’s progress and potential. Realizing the long-run potential for this app, the government approved 1.5 million Nepalese Rupees, or $15,000 USD, in funds for an annual National Dairy Development Board program to scale up the training and implementation in 15 districts with the involvement of 15 dairy cooperatives.

The government also committed to mobilize 300 technicians nationwide to train farmers to use the tool. With proper implementation of the app, the groups involved expect a positive impact on dairy animal productivity and an increase in the income of farmers.

“"This app has helped us calculate the amount of nutritious feed required by my animal and has proved to be very significant, my animals are healthier and at a small investment I’m making more profit, the amount of milk has also grown and has tremendously helped us farmers who didn’t have the knowledge earlier on the feed of the livestock:” – Champa Somare, Project Participant, Palpa
Heifer Nepal Wins Second Prize in Asian Regional Conference on Goats

Heifer Nepal was recently awarded the Nepal Best Employer Brand Award 2018 by the World HRD Congress for its exemplary work in using marketing communication effectively for Human Resources Development. The award was presented to the Country Director Dr. Shubh N. Mahato by Dr. R. L. Bhatia, the Founder of World CSR Day and World Sustainability, during an event at Soaltee Crowne Plaza.

The Nepal Best Employer Brand Awards 2018 recognized Heifer Nepal as an organization that has used marketing communications effectively in attracting, retaining and developing talent, as well as for its retention policy. World HRD Congress assessed Heifer Nepal as the best organization at translating and combining vision with action using a human resources approach to mesh human resources strategy with business objectives and cultivating competencies to equip the organization for the future.

World HRD Congress celebrates the Best Employer Brand Award in several geographic regions as a lead-up to the Global Employer Brands. In its thirteenth year, the event celebrated some of the finest organizations that believe in producing leaders, leaders of change, leaders who are iconic, and who contribute to “Talent Management, Talent Development and Talent Innovation.”

Heifer Nepal Wins Second Prize in Asian Regional Conference on Goats

Heifer Nepal received second prize for an oral paper presentation entitled “Contribution of Smallholder Farmers in Activating Self-sufficiency in Goat Meat” during the Asian Regional Conference on Goats 2018. The event was organized by Amity University, Jaipur in collaboration with International Goat Association.

Dr. Keshav Sah, Associate Director of Animal Well Being presented the paper during the “Socio-economic, Marketing and Financial Issues” session.

The sole objective of the conference was to promote the goat husbandry with the theme “Current Challenges in Goat Industry and the Strategies to Combat in Asian Region.” Heifer Nepal will serve as an organizing partner for the 2019 Asian Regional Conference on Goats, which will be held in Nepal and led by Agriculture and Forestry University.
Leadership and Cornerstones training provided to the women leaders of Nepali Congress

On the request of Nepal Women Association/NWA (the sister organization of Nepali Congress) the major opposition party in parliament of Nepal, Heifer International Nepal provided a 3 day training on “Personal Leadership and Cornerstone” to the women leaders from 26 different districts of Nepal. The training which was conducted in Nepal Administrative Staff College, Lalitpur saw 52 participants and was led by Senior Program Manager for Training Mr. Buddhi Khatri. First of its kind, the training was a new experience for the participants and held the objective of capacity building and empowerment. Former Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Krishna Sitaula paid a visit to the training venue to motivate and boost the spirits of the participants.

Heifers cornerstone training guides participants to look inward, develop a positive thought and action and makes them realize their own potential. This is the first time that the women received any training which was not political in nature and most have requested for Cornerstone to be held amongst the leaders of the parties at various levels, participants have also requested ToT for the Cornerstone.

At the end of the training, the Central member of Nepali Congress put forward the view that Cornerstone would be a great tool to be delivered throughout the country from top to grassroots level. He also requested Heifer to extend its program in all possible districts so that the people can take much benefit from it. The training was completed on a positive note where the participants made their personal action plans and have made commitment to bring positive change in their personal as well as their responsibility as party leaders. They have developed a special bond with Heifer which they found was unlike other INGO’s working for women empowerment in Nepal.

Heifer Nepal Co-hosted the International Poultry Symposium

The International Poultry Symposium (IPS2018) was held in Chitwan, Nepal from 28-30 October. This event was jointly organized by Agriculture and Forestry University, Ministry Of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Nepal Agriculture Research Council, Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, Michigan State University and Heifer International Nepal. The theme of this year’s symposium was “Meeting Poultry Demand for Food Safety and Security”. With participants from over 7 countries, various INGOs, students and the ministry; the main objective of this symposium was to provide a platform for sharing of the knowledge among national and international scientists working in the field of poultry production, education, research and extension sectors and aims to shorten the path to the latest scientific technical development.

This program revolved around the themes of i. Policy and socioeconomics of poultry production, ii. Poultry nutrition, iii. Poultry Health, iv. Poultry Genetic, Breeding and Biotechnology, v. Poultry Management and vi. Integrated farming and backyard poultry. Heifer International Nepal presented a paper on “Backyard Poultry- A major source of animal source food for pro-poor people in Nepal”. Backyard poultry is pivotal in rural parts of the country as it not only brings in a share of the income, provides a good base for animal sourced food and also fulfills the socio-cultural needs of a family.

While BYP is of great significance to the smallholding farming families, the production system is generally poor resulting high mortality rate. The paper focused on interventions that Heifer Nepal has been a part of to reduce these waves of outbreaks, increase productivity and contribution in family income and nutrition. This project was also able to establish linkages among the distributors, retailers and farmers and created a mass awareness about the Newcastle disease.

The event provided a good opportunity for many experts from various sectors in Poultry to unite and discuss collectively on the problem solving and shortening the gap between the farmers and the use of innovative technologies.
Banke Goat Business Center Inaugurated to Ensure Smallholder’s Access to Market

Heifer International Nepal proudly inaugurated the much awaited “Banke Goat Business Center” at Dhakeri, Raptisonari, Banke. Honorable Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development Mr. Chakrapani Khanal formally inaugurated the business center and also took a small tour of the facility. Established with financial and technical support from Heifer International Nepal, the business center’s main objective is to ensure access to market for smallholder farmers through collective marketing of goats produced by smallholders to urban markets. The inauguration event saw the participation of Provincial Minister for Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative along with other officials from the government, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, cooperative members, farmers, and journalists.

The business center supports its members in quality goat production and marketing. Operated by the Social Entrepreneurs Women’s Cooperative District Union Banke, this business center successfully links 15,000 farmers (from Banke, Bardiya and Dang districts) to end market. A total of 15 Social Entrepreneur Women’s Cooperatives are currently associated with the District Union.

With the capacity of holding 500 goats at a time, the business center is a state of the art facility which acts as a model for government, donor agencies, aspiring goat entrepreneurs, local residents.

The business center is a venue that supports smallholder farmers for goat collection/aggregation and trade. In addition to this, it also helps in increasing goat production and productivity as per market demand through providing inputs (like fodder/forage seeds, animal feed) and services (like animal health, loans, insurance, market) to farmers. The business center facility has been constructed following the animal welfare guidelines, and is a best learning platform for other organizations working in the sector.

Hon. Minister Mr. Charkapani Khanal appreciated both the goat business center and the goat transport vehicle designed by Heifer, which takes particular care for Animal Welfare and is built as per Animal transport standard as set by the government of Nepal. He said that “we should be recognizing women for all the hard work they put in despite having so many multitude of priorities”. He further added “Entrepreneurship is a culture that is lacking in the Nepalese mindset and that livestock is a great tool in reducing poverty and increase the standard of living of the people”. He made commitment that the Ministry will take suggestions from the farmers and then plan their policies accordingly.

Hon. Provincial Minister for Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives Ms. Aarti Poudel talked about struggles women faces in the agri-business sector and how Heifer’s work on Values Based Holistic Community Development has been slowly changing the face of the community. She recalled when she herself was involved in Heifer project as a partner and had to go door to door talking to farmers and understand their issues. As a Minister now, she talked about the innovative plans that ministry is coming up with - the “Guru Kishan” (Teacher Farmer) program where successful farmers will act as mentors for aspiring farmers and slowly tackle issues one at a time. She committed to work for the women as much as she can in upcoming days.

Ms. Ganga Chand Thakuri, President of Banke District Union said “this business center has made our dream come true. It was the biggest challenge especially for women farmers to roam around looking for buyers and
traders. Now, with this business center established, we can aggregate the goat produced by our cooperatives and their farmers at one place and negotiate with buyers, and able to send a truck load of goats to end markets in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Nepalgunj. This center has encouraged our members to increase their production as well, in both quality and quantity.”

A goat farmer associated with Janani Social Entrepreneur Women’s Cooperative (the coop is the member of the District Union, and sends goats collected from its members to the business center for selling) mentioned during goat collection event at coop, “we used to sell the goats to random buyers without weighing that makes us very little profit and at times even loss. Sometime we encountered with fraud buyers too. Now with the coop having its own goat collection center and the new goat business center run by the District union, we can sell our goats weighing in front of our eyes and getting the fair price for the animal. We are getting additional USD 20 to USD 30 per goat while selling through the coop.”

During the event, Ms. Krishna KC, member of provincial parliament, Ms. Randi Hedin, Board of Director of Heifer International, Dr. Mahendra Lohani, Senior Vice-president of Heifer International, Mr. Rudra Prasad Paudel from Department of Livestock Services, Mr. Jeevan Khatiwada from Goat Entrepreneurs Association congratulated Heifer Nepal and Banke District Union for inauguration of the business center and wished for its success in the future.

Dr. Shubh N. Mahato, Country Director of Heifer Nepal thanked all the stakeholders and participants for their support in making this possible and requested the continued collaboration for development of goat sub-sector and improving lives of farmers.

Annual meat consumption in Nepal is approximately 300,000 metric tons, of which goat meat accounts for 20%. This percentage is growing along with the purchasing power of consumers. Although the demand for goat meat is high, the formal market is underdeveloped, as evidenced by high import rates from India. The constraints on production (input market), compounded by smallholder producers’ lack of access to the formal food market (output market), have resulted in huge import of goat and goat meat from abroad. Currently, the import of goat and goat meat alone accounts for 2% of total trade deficit. The Banke Goat Business Center contributes towards reducing the import of goat and achieving the government’s commitment of making Nepal self-sufficient in meat.