

News and Events

Passing on the Gift month accelerates hope

April, the Passing on the Gift month was celebrated all around the world in full swing. Everyday of the month was marked with a special event in which project participants, line agencies, stakeholder's, volunteers and staff members participated with zeal. As news of the celebrations in one corner of the world reached the other corner, people were inspired and excited. In Nepal project participants celebrated by donating livestock along with fodder, forage seeds and saplings, scholarships to students, stationary

support, medicines for animals, support for disabled and the elderly of the community were also gifted. Heifer's approach of gifting livestock and knowledge to its participants has helped in lifting millions of families from the drench of poverty and achieve sustainability. The practice of passing on the gift is the core value of Heifer's work where the family receiving a gift of livestock passes on an offspring to another family. It is proving to be an excellent means of resource multiplication and utilization for a country like Nepal where lack of

resources challenge development initiatives to a great extent. In sync with the activities of the month the staff of Heifer contributed and facilitated additional 25 scholarships to needy children. The Bridge Club Nepal contributed in the festivities by donating clothes for children. The clothes provided were distributed in project families in Rautahat, Parbat, Baglung, Tanahun, and Sunsari.



A joyous family at a pass-on ceremony at Rautahat

Heifer expands its coverage

Heifer Nepal has signed Letter of Agreement (LOA) with 37 partners to launch 41 new projects in February 2009. This expands Heifer's working districts to 38 with the addition of Kapilvastu, Dhankuta, Sarlahi, Saptari, Siraha, Rolpa and Dang district. 14 of these projects are being launched with project partners Heifer Nepal has already

worked with. The remaining 23 are in partnership with new project partners. The projects have been designed to accomplish 4 major objectives: significantly increase income levels, improve nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, conservation and improvement of the environment and empowerment of the women and youth of the community.

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Amrit Bhandari, Rabi Chitrakar,
Neena Joshi, Puja Singh

Heifer International Nepal
Hattiban, Lalitpur-15
G.P.O. Box 6043,
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 977-1-5250554 / 5250841
Fax: 977-1-5250873
Mail: info@hpinepal.org.np
URL: www.heifernepal.org
HQ URL: www.heifer.org

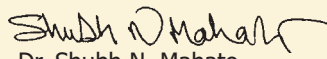
From the Country Director's Desk

Dear Friends,



I believe in the spirit of Passing on the Gift. During my visits to our project sites and interactions with our project participants, I am warmed by the extent to which this spirit is understood and practiced. When Heifer planned to celebrate the month of April as "Pass on the Gift" month, I was sure that Nepal would make a good contribution in making the event a success. The extraordinary outcome and impact of this month's activities have overwhelmed us all. I am proud of how selflessly our project participants passed-on with humility and dignity. My excitement is heightened when I think of all the families who have benefitted, and the many more who will benefit in the future by these recipients. 1943 families have been benefitted this month from the resources of past recipients. I believe that the act of passing on is a strong pillar in the mission of alleviation of poverty and hunger. I thank you for your continuous support and encouragement.

Yours Sincerely,


Dr. Shubh N. Mahato
Country Director



"My son is so happy he has a goat to play with. This small animal brings so many hopes into our lives. The income from this goat will help in paying for my son's education."

Rama Subedi, Tanahu

Rising Above Adversities

Neem Kumari's struggle for a better life

Neem Kumari Thing from Khattar, Sindhuli comes from a poor family with 6 children. Being an only daughter she was limited to household chores. Her marriage at 16 didn't change her life as she expected. Married to a poor and uneducated farmer she was tossed in a vicious cycle of poverty. The produce from their ancestral land would only feed their extended family for 4/5 months. For the rest of the year she and her husband had to work as daily wage laborers. Due to the lack of knowledge on family planning they bore 3 sons and 3 daughters - more than they could feed. Along with her 8 children she was also raising 2 of her brother-in-law's children. Both her brother-in-law and his wife had migrated to a Gulf country for work. With 9 children crammed inside the 2 roomed thatched house, Neem Kumari and her husband struggled to put food on the table. When nothing seemed to improve their situation they mortgaged their ancestral land for USD 66 and her husband migrated to India for work. Unable to repay the loan, the merchants took over their land leaving them with nothing but their sorrows.



She joined the Sayapatri Women's Savings Group with 20 other women of her village in 2006. Amongst growing disapproval from the community's male counterparts they met every month and started saving. None of the women had independent incomes; they saved measly amounts from the household expenses handed to them by their husbands.

"I feel like I can commit to anything now. If someday I feel I can't make enough to pay my bills I just work harder"

The gift of 2 goats in 2007 along with animal management training added to Neem's enthusiasm. She also received organic kitchen gardening training and some vegetable seeds with which the family started a kitchen garden in their backyard which provided them with nutritious vegetables. She used only organic manure and her vegetable garden flourished. She soon expanded her small backyard garden to a commercial vegetable farm. Last year she earned USD 500 from selling the vegetable and fruits she grew. With a loan of USD 120 from her group fund, she invested in a poultry farm. She earns around USD 133 every year from a small but well managed poultry farm in her backyard. She also produces organic manure. Most of it is used in her vegetable fields. She sells the left over manure along with fodder seeds which earn her around USD 66 a year. Neem Kumari started with 2 goats in her shed. With her earnings she has bought 2 buffalos and an ox. She still has a few goats to remind her of the beginnings of her good fortune.

Today Neem Kumari sends all 8 children to school. Her husband who was once adamant that she leave the group has returned home and now helps with the household chores along with the farming. She has rebuilt her house which now has 2 stories and a metal roof that does not leak in the monsoon. Her confidence in her own abilities is so strong that she has committed to saving USD 6 per month in a local co-operative apart from her monthly group savings. "I feel like I can commit to anything now. If someday I feel I can't make enough to pay my bills I just work harder," she clearly voices her confidence.

Apart from the regular cleaning campaigns, efforts to remove social discrimination and violence, her group has also managed to build a motorable road in her community under her leadership. Her village is atop a hill and has no natural water resource. As a solution to the lack of irrigation her group has facilitated in initiating an irrigation project and compelled the local government to contribute USD 4000.

Neem Kumari has risen from dire poverty. She thanks Heifer for showing her the way to a better life.

Heifer Nepal's strategic plan evaluation

Dr. Binod Bhatta, External Evaluator

The following are the extracts from the evaluation report of the strategic plan for the fiscal year 2005 to 2009.

Heifer Project International Nepal (HPIN) program has been strategically trying and innovating its support to meet the mission, vision and goals of the organization in Nepal since its formal establishment in 1997. The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an external perspective in evaluating the direction of strategic priorities, objectives and activities of HPIN and to determine how this has contributed to the achievement of Heifer's mission.

Country Office Level: The country office practices shared leadership in its operation, which is one of the best forms of participatory style of leadership. It was noticed that shared leadership is well understood and highly valued by its senior management team and the same is replicated by lower hierarchy. The authority of the position is defined. The practice of appropriate and clear allocation and agreement on responsibility also increases accountability. The culture of general sharing and public audit, and Participatory Self Review and Planning (PSRP) at regular intervals has been strong tools to strengthen transparency and accountability.

Project Partner Level: The partners of Heifer Nepal have been very supportive, highly motivated and committed. In other words had Heifer Nepal not been able to select and capacitate its partner through a rigorous selection and training process, they would not have been able to achieve what they have achieved today. This has contributed to the sustainability of the implemented program which is rare in any other development projects. The partners had very high commitment to Cornerstones and Values Based Holistic Community Development (VBHCD).

Project Level: Self Help Group (SHG) formation process goes through the process of self maturation. This process focus on women who are almost always put in the leadership positions. Though women-only SHGs were formed, the husbands (whole family) are considered as part of the group. SHG operates as an independent institution with its unique separate identity. Group empowerment has taken place through the social bonding and capacity building (through training, mentoring, PSRP). Tremendous impact of the program has been visible on the life and attitude of the members of SHGs as they have fully internalized and are practicing the 12 Cornerstones and values promoted by Heifer Nepal.

Impacts: At the ground level the impact was visible in terms of increased income and confidence of the group members. At deeper level the impact was visible in terms of very high level of social capital build up which is generally not common. The groups were able to mobilize local resources to their and their community's benefit and the impacts were visible in terms of better hygiene and sanitation at home and in the community, their ecology, gender equality and equity, increased quest for providing best education for their children and not differentiating between girls and boys. They have also been able to diversify their livelihood means and options.

Government's Development Priority and Heifer Nepal's Opportunities for Development

The three year interim plan, policy and programs of government of Nepal and budget speech 2008/09 provide ample development opportunities for Heifer Nepal's programs, approach and practices. There may be possibilities of strategic partnership with various government and non-government organizations, which needs to be explored critically, keeping in mind not to loose the essence of VBHCD. However, the challenges are there in expanding its coverage and influence area. As there had been a limited coverage and reach, it is difficult to show impact at macro level to convince the government planners and senior administrators.

Conclusion: Based on the review and field study, the evaluation team concludes that the Heifer Nepal's program and approach are very good and sustainable, though it needs a lot of flexibility. Besides, these programs cannot be envisaged in a tight time bound manner; rather they should have a flexible time period. The team also believes that the VBHCD model has been a noble, innovative and successful approach to holistic development of the rural and poor community. Therefore, it must be continued without losing its identity and values while trying to expand and upscale this approach. As the program has expanded significantly and is expected to expand further in coming days, there is a need to enhance present monitoring and evaluation system.

Dr. Bhatta is a Ph. D in Forestry and has more than 20 years of experience in the field of rural development with expertise in monitoring, evaluation and strategic planning. He has worked with organizations like the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, GTZ, AusAID, CARE, WWF and Winrock International to name a few. He is also a Director for Research for a private firm, Alliance for Social mobilization.

Visits and Tours

A gift of experience: Heifer Nepal Study Tour

Heifer Nepal hosted a study tour from 13-23 March, 2009 for 14 participants consisting of Heifer Volunteers and Heifer International staff members. The ten day tour through Heifer Nepal's project sites in Baglung, Tanahu, Chitwan and Nawalparasi included group interactions, home visits, a passing on the gift ceremony and the usual song and dance sessions, typical of a Nepali culture. The participants witnessed the impacts of Heifer's efforts. With heavy hearts, women recited the tale of the hardships of rural life along with the challenges like caste, race and gender discrimination, lack of resources and awareness. With bright faces and glory they talked of Heifer's gifts of livestock and training and how it changed them and their lives. Attending the Passing on the Gift ceremony at Vijaynagar wove all the experiences



Participants pose for a group picture at scenic and soothing Kurintar

together in the spirit of giving, the core of Heifer's beliefs. "As the Study Tours Program Coordinator, I have traveled with Heifer to see our work in several countries. I have seen poverty and the resilience of our staff and the people we work with. But there were several things that made Nepal a unique experience for me. I had never seen such great poverty in other countries, especially in the semi-urban areas. To address such poverty, one could see the extreme dedication of our Nepal Staff and partners to form relationships with every Heifer recipient, to encourage confidence in the women of Nepal to break free from traditional roles. Finally, in Nepal, everything is beautiful – from the textiles and architecture to the land and the people," Sara Drew, Study Tours Program Coordinator.

Measuring the mean

Project families benefitted since 1993 till December 2008

32017

Animals placed

Goats 36088

Buffalo 4138

Swine 2290

Cattle 99

Sheep 221

Angora Rabbits 158

Poultry 2516

Bee Colonies 1264

Scholarships provided to girl children since 2000

1009

Heifer India team visits Nepal program

The Heifer India team visited Nepal from 5-12 March, 2009 with the objective of co-learning. The team of 3, the Country Representative, Finance and Administration Manager and Programs Officer, visited project sites in Tanahu and Kaski to observe and learn from Heifer's work in Nepal. The newly established Heifer India Liaison Office, under the leadership of Country Representative Avni Malhotra, is in the process of taking over the reins of India program, which was previously overseen by Heifer Nepal.

April, the "Passing on the Gift" month: Essence, Impact and Influence

Passing on the Gift is a journey. A woman leaves pass on event with a small gift. She leaves with an animal tied to a short leash and a hand full of hopes with her head slightly bowed and a quite quivering smile of gratitude. Her heart beats fast of the joy of receiving this gift. It also beats slowly at the same time of the trust and confidence that has been bestowed on her. Time passes by - as it always does. When this woman walks back to another pass on event some months later- its hard to recognize her. She stands taller and firmer. She has a full blown smile, a sure stride and her head high. It's easy to see the journey she has had. She has traveled the distance from being a receiver to being a donor. It is a long, hard and tiring path that always ends with more happiness, confidence and dignity than it started with. As she looks around for someone, she looks for signs of her, of how she was some months ago, the same quivering smile, the slight bow of the head and eyes that look upon her with gratitude and hope. She will be the new her, she will struggle like her and in due time be capable to pass on a gift with the pride she does today.

All around the world, Heifer called out to "Pass on the Gift" this April. In Nepal communities overwhelmed us with their enthusiasm and dedication to pass on. Women gathered in the hills and the planes - in cold rain and in the scalding heat to give to those who were in need. A gift once given out of faith, belief and hope had multiplied a number of times over. To give is selfness, but our project participants have risen beyond selflessness by assuring that those

they gave to continue giving by taking on the responsibility of building the receiver's capacity to take care of and benefit from the gift. We remain humbled by the dedication of these women who have given and continue to give beyond our expectations. Heifer Nepal has benefitted 32,017 families in the past 11 years of its work in Nepal through livestock and knowledge. This April – the month of Passing on the Gift, saw an additional 1943 families benefit from resources generated from donors who were once struggling families. The offspring of an animal placed once being passed on upto 6 times to 6 poor and needy families. A 15 year old student received a selfless gift of a goat and vowed to pass on all her life to benefit more needy and poor families. An 80 year old couple fulfilled their age old dream of raising goats as a donor gave them 2 goats. An ethnic and landless minority in search of a new way of life found dignity in giving the gift to others struggling to make ends meet. Many donors passed on the gift and many receivers promised to pass on.

Neighbors, reporters, politicians, teachers and government officials all witnessed the event that had changed lives for the better. National television and radio programs informed many more of the events that celebrated hope and selflessness in country torn apart from lack of resources. They heard legacies of hope and dreams come true from the donors. They saw new dreams and hopes for the future in the eyes of the recipients. They saw how a small gift changed lives. This April- "Passing on the Gift" month was celebrated in Nepal – in all its essence, impact and influence.

An Ethnic Minority moves towards sustainability

The Chepangs, an ethnic minority of Nepal, are a race in dilemma. Hunters and wanderers by nature, the Chepangs have made a living from the forest for ages. They settle in clearings or wastelands in forests and do very little farming. In the recent times with the advent of land reform, land ownership and wildlife and nature protection laws, the Chepangs have been forced to change their traditional ways of living. Adapting to the recent changes in livelihood has been challenging but as a group of Chepang women in Chitwan have proved, it's a challenge they have undertaken well. "The 2 goats I received from Heifer have made life different for me and my family. I have sold 7 goats and the earnings have helped to ease the pain of poverty. It covers my household expenses and pays for my children's education. We have nothing. No skills, no education, not even the

rights to the land where our ancestors lived. These goats are the only thing I have as mine. They are my only asset and have helped my family start a new life in this changed world. I am gifting 2 goats to Phulmaya. I hope she embarks on a new journey with this gift and makes a living and a place in this world for her and her family," says Shanti Chepang. Shanti gifted 2 goats to Phulmaya. Sunmaya Chepang, central vice-chairman of Nepal Chepang Association said that Heifer's program is exemplary. "I thank Heifer for bringing this program in such socially, culturally and economically backward community. I am delighted to find the Chepang women in the stage and expressing their views especially since the Chepang's have their own dialect and are not fluent in the Nepali language." 26 members of the group passed on 52 goats, 1 buck and 14 kids.

Focus: Through the Lens



← A total of 3422 goats were donated in the past on ceremonies. Goats are ideal for families having less land as they require less space. Chandra Kumari Raut at the age of 75 donated 2 goats to Meena Pradhan signifying that it's never too late to give to the needy.

→ Kalumaya Shrestha gifted piglets to Pampha Nepali. 77 swine were passed on during the month. Swine have many offspring at a time and are raised and sold for meat purposes. They provide a good income for struggling families.



The Chepang group (donors) and the recipients gather in joyous harmony.



*Please read,
then pass it on*



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Reflections

"I have always thought of Heifer as an organization that gifts livestock to poor and needy families. This tour has made me realize that it is so much more than just animals. All the training that goes into making the project participants self sustainable is astounding. There are so many challenges that we from the western world cannot even understand. But despite of all this, it works. People are benefitting from Heifer. I could see it clearly in the projects I visited. As a teacher and a mother I am touched by the changes the capacity building trainings have bought in the lives of so many families." Elizabeth Woolsey, Heifer Supporter, France, Participant of Nepal Study Tour 2009



Voices from the Field

"Poor people have no place in this world. We are insulted often and looked upon with disgust. Poverty is not our choice or the result of our deeds. I and my husband have wanted to raise goats for a long



time. We made many requests to our well off neighbors to let us take care of their goats for a small part of the income, but no one took pity on us. The goats that have come to my home today bring me hope of fulfilling a dream I have had since I was 20. I am 80 now and I see it as hope for my grandchildren; it's an opportunity to make their dreams come true." Bikinimaya Mahato (far right) is the mother-in-law of Sita Mahato who received 2 goats as a part of passing on the gift month in Kawasoti, Nawalparasi.