



Millenium Village

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Project Profile

Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation Project (IRDNCP)

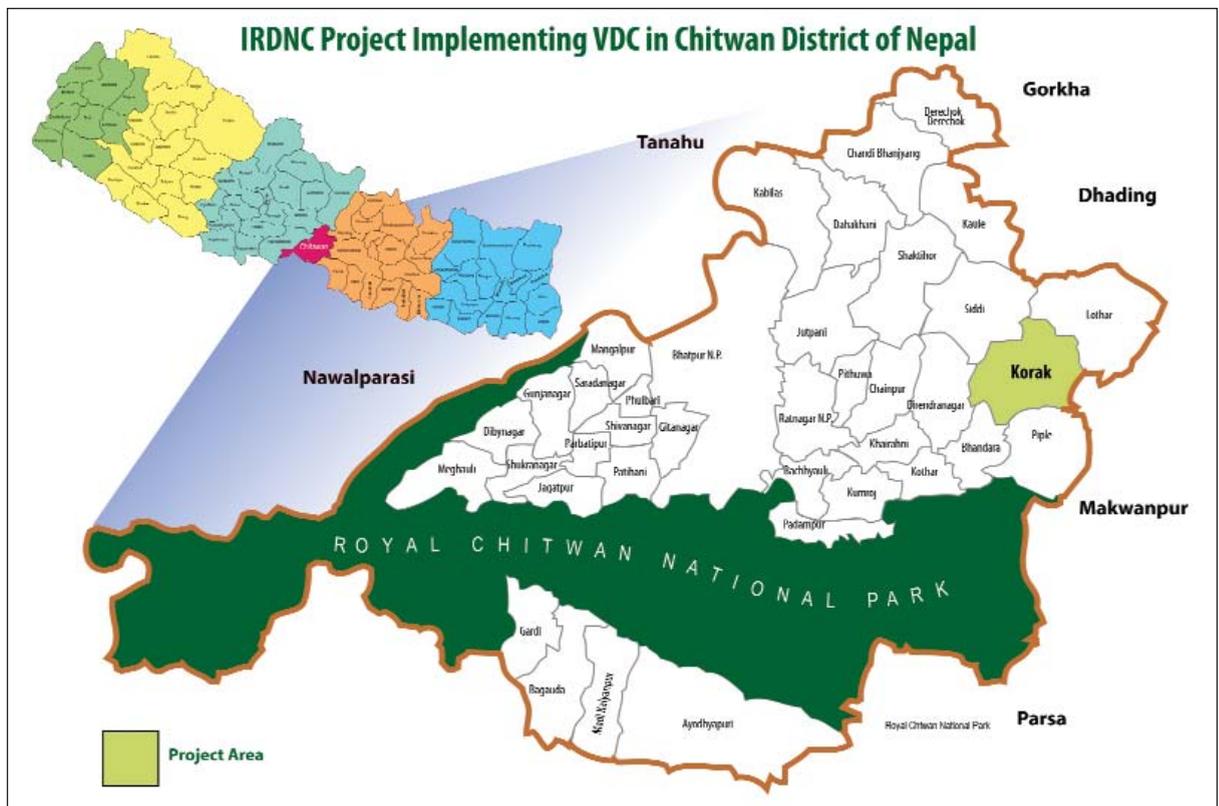


Women community members interacting with project officials

Introduction

Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), with funding from German Non-Governmental Agency Welthungerhilfe and BMZ, has implemented the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) project in Korak VDC of Chitwan district, Nepal. Total area of Korak is 50 sq. km. with an altitude range from 305 to 1965 meters above the sea level. The VDC is predominantly (90 percent) populated by Nepal's ethnic communities, namely Tamang and Chepang. Both the communities are considered as marginalised ethnic groups in Nepal. The food availability among Chepang community has noted extremely inadequate in the region. Due to extreme hunger and insufficient nutrition, most of the community people have lower life expectancy on average compared to the overall population of the country.

The duration of the project is 41 months, starting from August 1, 2011 - December 31, 2014. The target group consists of 1,200 smallholder households and 95 percent of these are involved in informal sectors. For livelihood, the community people mostly rely on agricultural crops and temporary wages. The major crops grown in the VDC are maize, millet, potato vegetables and buckwheat. Crops are cultivated in small terraced fields where slash and burn system still exist in some settlements. The average landholding is below 0.5 ha with low productivity due to insufficient and inefficient production inputs. The local economy is very weak, pushing the community people towards extreme hunger, malnutrition and external debt. The predisposing factors for these are small land holding, poor education, poor participation in governance and less priority projects from the government. This has not only posed multiple challenges for a dignified life of



the community people but for maintaining basic subsistence.

The degradation of forest resources is another factor in livelihood constraint, which has resulted in frequent landslides and flash floods in the VDC. The agricultural land is distorted and production is unsecured due to floods, erratic rainfalls and prolonged drought, which have enforced people to migrate to lower areas, leaving cultivable land fallow in the mid and upper hilly areas. This has not only reduced the overall production in the VDC but has distressed the existing socio-economic condition of the local residents.

In contrast to the given restraints, there are enormous development potentials in the VDC backed by diverse ecological niches, huge manpower and increasing market demand of the farm produces. Several cash crops, cereals and forest products bear potential to grow, which directly contributes to the food security and generate income through marketing. Thousands of unemployed youths can be mobilised for different enterprises through groups and cooperatives. In this context, the IRDNCP is set to establish representative institutions at local level aimed at addressing the general and specific interests of the locals through their own participation, with an overall intention to ensure food security and uplift the livelihood of the VDC residents. These very potentialities could be fructified if the available resources are mobilized with functional approach.

Project Objective

The Human Development Index (HDI) among the Korak residents has been noted exceptionally low

even as compared to other rural regions of the country. In this regard, the underlying purpose of the IRDNC project is to uplift the livelihood standard of the VDC's population in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) formulated by the United Nations. Thus, the project is also correspondingly referred as Millennium Village Programme, aiming to transform the Korak VDC so as to meet the objectives enshrined in the MDGs. The project's overall objective is to contribute in achieving basically three MDGs in Korak VDC:

- Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
- Promote Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
- Ensure Ecological Sustainability

Other specific objectives of the project

- To create conditions that support pluralistic and democratic co-existence
- To facilitate the population to achieve lasting food security and sustainable management of natural resources
- To strengthen structures and mechanisms for enabling the target group's active participation in economic and social development process
- To improve agricultural productivity for long term food availability
- To enable the locals to process and effectively market agricultural and forest products
- To improve income situation of the target population
- To implement sustainable integrated forest management practices to protect the forest in the project area.

Project Components

Institutional Development

Formation of self-help group (SHGs)

The self-help groups (SHGs) are formed through the participation of community people in the VDC. The project staff facilitate the groups' formation and sensitize the participants to develop self-motivation among them. Through this process, the project staff help promote self-governance among the SHGs. Interactions between male and female participants are encouraged in the groups. The SHGs implement small projects on kitchen gardening, organic farming and other income generation activities.

Formation of people's forum (village planning committee)

People's forum comprises the representatives of self-help groups including both men and women. The PF acts as an advisory body for planning, implementation and coordination of different project activities. It also assists and advises the political representatives and VDC officials at village council meetings on budgeting the development activities. The PF encourages and helps strengthen the SHGs to formulate their own plan. It also plays an active role in terms of supporting in VDC planning and allocating development projects in different locations.

Formation of Cooperatives

The project sensitizes the member of SHGs to form cooperatives. The SHGs are also made aware about the basic concepts and working procedures regarding the cooperatives. The local cooperatives collect the savings of the villagers and mobilise the credit among them. Such cooperatives also support the local farmers to produce quality crops and vegetables through improved farming methods and help establish market linkages by providing vehicles.

Development of VDC Periodic Plan

A four year periodic development plan for the VDC is formulated with participation of the community people. The plan incorporates the essential components of the development factors and facilitates rational use of the available resources. It streamlines such factors, which can attract the funds of government sectors, private companies, NGOs and external donors.

Capacity Development

Training and Orientation to Community Members

A series of trainings are provided to the community people in terms of capacity building, social mobilisation, right-based approach, agricultural technologies, organic farming, ecological and forest conservation, community development, gender equality, cooperative functions, health and sanitation and so on. The local farmers have been targeted to receive training in ecological agriculture and advisory services on agro-forestry and environment through the Farmer Field Schools. The trainings are conducted based on the findings of capacity gap assessment in the group. This approach enables the local people to adapt

with new technologies, develop managerial skills, coordinate with line agencies and develop appropriate marketing strategies, which will serve as their overall empowerment. In this way, the beneficiaries eventually get institutionalised into cooperatives and play the role of formal institution.

Coordination and Linkage with Stakeholders

Strong linkage and coordination are established between the line agencies and self-help groups in project implementation process. This ensures a long-term management and ownership of people's forum, which eventually leads to the sustainability of overall achievements in the VDC.

Infrastructure Support

The project comprises infrastructure support such as constructing irrigation system and community buildings, upgrading roads alongside training and facilitating the local populace to build improved cooking stoves. The upgraded roads help connect most of the village settlements and allow them to transport their agricultural products to the market. The community building acts as the community centre that encourages the local population to play an active role in local planning and development processes. This supports the local population in their efforts to own responsibility. The irrigation system is meant to assist in better agricultural production and improved cooking stove is an energy efficient and environmentally friendly approach. Development of irrigation facilities in the VDC is crucial, as it helps boost agricultural productivity of more than 85 percent of the VDC population depending on agriculture.

Income Generation Activities (IGAs)

The project comprises different income generating activities (IGAs), such as livestock rearing, vegetable farming, improved seed production, skill development trainings on agricultural entrepreneurship and production of non-timber forest products. The project trains and facilitates the local farmers in these regards and also helps them establish market linkages for their locally produced items.

Natural Resource Management and Environment Protection

Another major component of the project is to effectively manage and conserve natural resources, for instance, through the formation of fruit nursery and production of non-timber forest products. Altogether 8 community forests are into operation in the VDC, covering around 3033 ha. of land. Most of the forests in the region contain herb trees along with other timber and non-timber plants. The community people are trained, sensitised and facilitated in terms of management and conservation of such forest resources. They are also taught to adopt effective conservation techniques. The project promotes good conservancy governance among the community people in terms of environment protection. Likewise, reforestation and plantation of trees on the leftover lands are carried out simultaneously as an unwavering approach towards environment protection.

Formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs)



Saving collection and investment to community members

These are the broad based community groups formed at settlement level for grassroots planning and implementation of project activities based on participatory approach. Till now, 55 SHGs have been formed in the VDC. The SHGs have established in all the settlements and have been able to identify their local agenda for development. As a response, the SHGs have developed and implemented annual action plan of their respective groups. Likewise, the SHGs have been conducting a number of production and income generation activities. In each settlement, at least one group is objectively focusing on regular monthly saving (Rs. 25 per member in average) as per the community need assessment and coordination with local authorities. The groups are inclusive in nature, incorporating 52 % women, 30 % economically marginalised people and overall 99% of indigenous ethnic representatives. The harmonious effort and collective work at settlement have increased people's faith on institutional approach. Strong linkage and coordination are established between the line agencies and self-help groups in project implementation process. This ensures a long-term management and ownership of people's forum, which eventually leads to the sustainability of overall achievements in the VDC.

People's Forum (PF)

A peoples Forum (PF) is formed in the VDC based on a consensus with the Self Help Groups (SHGs). It comprises of 27 members representing from different ecological niches and community groups. The PF acts as an advisory body for planning, implementation and coordination of different project activities. It also assists and advises the political representatives for project formulation and prioritisation. PF is playing crucial role by establishing a link among the project and government line agencies/NGOs/ INGOs at VDC and

district levels. This has fulfilled the role of local authority which was long vacant over the years.



General assembly of agricural cooperative in Korak VDC

Cooperative established

With the maturation of SHGs and increasing realisation of collectivism on social and economic activities, a farmer's cooperative is established in the VDC. It comprises of 50 members, an executive board with an equipped office in Kirantar. The members are provided training on managerial and technical entities of cooperative. A four wheeler pick-up is also purchased developing a mutual fund between cooperative and the project. The vehicle now is used to transport the inputs in the community and farm produces from collection centres to the market.

Strategic plan formulated

With mutual technical and financial support, the project has facilitated VDC officials and political leaders for developing a strategic plan of VDC. This is undertaken through a consultation of political leaders, people's forum and related stakeholder in the VDC and in the district. The plan has incorporated all available potential resources at VDC and its periphery. So it has established a landmark for multi sectoral development depicting the future potentials and possibilities which can attract resources from government sectors, private companies, NGOs and external donors based on the strategic activities.

Community centre established

A community building has constructed at the centre of the VDC. Community donated 1000 meter square of land for the building with total pedestal area of 214 square meter. The centres encourage the local population to play an active role in local planning and development processes and ensure that the SHGs are better networked with the various government and non-government organisations. Other two community buildings are also undergoing on construction in two different places. Management committee is formed for each centre which governs the operation and maintenance of the community centres.



Community building constructed in Korak

Irrigation supports

Based upon the community demand, the project has supported community people by constructing and renovating different types of irrigation facilities such as ponds, water reservoirs, canals and pipes. Four new irrigation facilities have been constructed and two irrigation canals have been rehabilitated. The beneficiaries have contributed around 20% of the total cost in the form of labour and local materials. The irrigation users committees are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the irrigation system. The irrigation command area accounts more than 120 ha of land facilitating to 184 HHs for year round irrigation. There has been a marked increase in productivity and production of cereals, vegetables and cash crops with the delivery of irrigation in the village.



Irrigation canal constructed for year round irrigation

Seed bank established

A seed bank building, with 5-ton storage capacity, has been constructed in the VDC. Different crops' varieties have been identified to be stored in the building. For overall management, a seed production/management committee consisting 12 members has been formed in the VDC. Two major seed growing villages are identified for bean seed

production with a targeted yield of 7 -10 metric ton per year. The members have targeted major cereals (4 crops), legumes (2 crops) and vegetables (6 crops) for seed bank.

Rural roads upgraded

The earthen road with 17-km length to mid hill village has been upgraded, where light vehicles can drive through highway. This road has connected key settlements of Korak VDC across the way and assists on transport of agricultural and forest products from the VDC to the "East-West Highway". The road has largely benefitted the VDC residents to reach the main markets for education, health services and marketing activities. The production inputs are carried by the cooperative vehicles to the upper areas and farm produces are collected and delivered to market areas in a preferred time.



Rural road upgraded to facilitate input supply and marketing of local products

Farmers field schools (FFSs) established

Twelve FFSs have been established till date in the VDC for encouraging farmers toward organic farming practices with integrated farm management approach. It has enabled 490 farmers to take such initiatives. FFSs are conducted with set curriculum,



Community members engaged in a Farmer's Field School



Community members participating in an IPM practical session

preferably on integrated pest management, organic farming and composting techniques. It has direct implication on production, productivity and income generation. Around 20% crop yield has been increased corresponding to 15-20% of household food security and nutrition. More than 180 households have diversified 3-6 crop varieties in their farm, adopted integrated farm management practices and approached toward self-sustained farming model.

Skill development and income generation (IG) trainings held



Bottled honey for selling in the market

More than 45 trainings have been conducted to farmers and youths to enhance their skills on farm production, post-harvest and marketing skills. These were mainly on fresh vegetable production, livestock rearing, vegetable seed production, bee keeping, fruit cultivation, post-harvest handling and business management. Such training have imparted them on technical and managerial skills.

Energy-saving technologies developed

Among several activities, energy saving is a core activity of the project. Under this, two activities viz; fixing improved cooking stoves and bio-briquette production are piloted. The project assisted on training and external material support to the community peoples on both the activities. As a result, 330 households have prepared improved cooking stoves and used in their kitchens. Similarly, two communities have engaged on producing the bio-briquettes which is aimed to sell in the market.



Bio-briquette production both for energy saving and income generation

Forest in the project area protected

As per its initiative to effectively manage and conserve natural resources, the project has supported in the formation of fruit nursery and production of non-timber forest products. Altogether 8 community forests are into operation in the VDC, covering around 3033 ha. of land. The community people have been trained, sensitised, facilitated and provided external material support in terms of management and conservation of the forest resources. They are also taught to adopt effective conservation techniques. The support was provided in coordination with District Forest Office (DFO) and functional support of VDC secretary. As a result, the DFO supported by providing resource person for the three-day training on forest management and 10,000 saplings (free of cost) for the plantation. The project has provided material support to establish two new forest nurseries, where 50,000 saplings are targeted to be produced and planted in the following year. The communities have planted more than 20,000 different plant species in different barren patches and in the cultivated farm land. Eight forest user groups' representatives are provided forest management training and facilitated to manage the forest in a productive way. There is increasing consensus of people on afforestation, soil conservation and new plantation in the forest area, community forest plots, farm lands and barren lands. This has demonstrated a coordinated effort on ecological conservation and energy promotion in the VDC.

Housewife turns economically independent, empowered woman

Twenty-eight year old Anita Tamang, a resident of Korak VDC in Chitwan, resides with her 6-member family, including two children, husband and parents-in-law. She used to spend most of her time in household works and both she and her husband also used to get involved in external labor works so as to collect daily wages to sustain their basic family expenditures. But her involvement in Mothers Group formed through the facilitation of the project has helped bring a significant change in her life. She has now risen above the mere confinement of home and turned herself into a socially and economically independent woman. She is now able to claim her rights out of awareness and, through the training provided by the project, has also acquired skills on more productive agricultural methods. Through the adaptation of the skills like kitchen gardening and off-seasonal farming, she and her husband have now begun commercial vegetable farming, with a monthly income of more than 15,000 NPR. This has not only helped her family fulfill its daily nutritional needs but she is also now able to garner extra income by selling vegetables in the local market, thanks to the project's support to establish and improve the community farmers' access to the market. This eventually has enabled her and her husband to get rid of labor work that used to help them earn only a meager income. This also speaks loudly in terms of the economic independence brought in to her family. Thus, breaking the existing convention, Anita Tamang, a woman member in the family, has been able to take this initiative to support and empower herself and her family, earning herself more respect and support from her husband, other family members and the society.

Improved cooking stove as a mean to alleviate pollution and health problems

Forty two years old Bishnu Maya Chepang used to rely on forest firewood for daily cooking, which used to produce a lot of smoke, resulting in burning eyes, cough and other lung related ailments. But after the project facilitated the construction of improved cooking stoves (ICSs), it has helped bring drastic changes in her life. She shares that she and her family members got rid of such problems soon after starting to use ICS. Likewise, 38-year-old Sunitalimaya Tamang from Korak-5 Kirantar has been relieved from plodding in kitchen on a daily basis. After the construction of ICS, she could now spend less time in kitchen and also don't need to regularly strive to fetch firewood. All in all, this has helped the village residents to spend their time in other fruitful works and save them from daily exhaustion and pollution.



Locally made improved cooking stove after training

Majority of Korak residents are obliged to depend on fuelwood for their basic energy consumption. Women are mainly responsible for cooking activities and collecting firewood, thus are prone to get exposed to indoor air pollution. The indoor air pollution caused by combustion of biomass fuel has been noted as the major cause of respiratory ailments, pneumonia and eye infection, especially among women and children. As the project facilitated to build improved cooking stoves (ICSs), it has led to a significant reduction in kitchen pollution. The majority of women using ICS have responded that they now no longer suffer from breathing problems, burning eyes or other respiratory diseases. At the same time, this has also helped the village residents to save almost 40% of their firewood obtained from forest. This has eventually reduced dependency upon forest firewood, thus helping reduce deforestation, contributing in ecological preservation.

Vegetable farming training proved fruitful

Kalu Chepang, resident of Korak VDC ward number 3, is a 40-year-old industrious farmer. Agriculture is the only source of his family income. He has a total of four Kattha land and had been practicing traditional method of farming, which could produce the crops sufficient for only three months a year. Rest of the months they were dependent on labor work to feed themselves. During the time of food scarcity, they used to consume the wild foods such as Githa, Vyakyur and Sisno as their daily meal. After the introduction of IRDNC project, Kalu Chepang received Nursery training and regular vegetable seed support, after which he started Nursery in his three Kattha land and cultivated vegetables in the remaining one Kattha land. He sold vegetable fruit seeds from his Nursery and earned a total of NPR 40,000 income. Now Kalu Chepang can afford for his family's living, his children's education and also to



A nursery for commercial vegetable farming

celebrate festivals. Kalu Chepang is excited with his achievements and he also plans to manage nursery to increase earning and make his VDC a model of development.

Increase in Income after Construction of Irrigation Pond

Twenty-five year old Prakash Tamang, resident of Kirantar, Korak-5, Chitwan is a Treasurer of Danfe

Farmers Group. His ultimate source of family income is none other than agriculture. Prakash and his wife used to do labor work and farming, but it was not enough to feed his entire family. The traditional way of farming and lack of irrigation system failed to produce enough to sustain his family's livelihood. However, after the onset of IRDNC project, Prakash found new directions in his life. The project introduced new and improved vegetable farming technology and constructed plastic pond for irrigation after request from the local community. After participating in 16 week I.P.M training and receiving vegetable seeds from RRN, Prakash was motivated to cultivate seasonal and non-seasonal vegetables in his farm. Earlier, Prakash used to cultivate only corn in his 5 Kattha land. But after the construction of plastic pond, he could earn a total of NPR 70,000 just in a year from the cultivation of variety of vegetables. He managed to spend the earning on his household expenses, children's education and celebrating festivals. His family now has sufficient food for a whole year and they also don't need to do the labor work. Prakash has also bought 5 goats and a television set from the remaining money.



Irrigation pond for year round water collection

Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), established in 1993, is a Nepali non-government, social development organisation involved in rural development, action-oriented research and policy advocacy focusing on peasants, poor women, dalits and indigenous nationalities, and other vulnerable communities through the process of facilitation, social mobilisation, empowerment and self-organisation. RRN's work is based on the four-fold approach to rural reconstruction covering: education to combat illiteracy and empower people to access their rights; sustainable livelihood to fight poverty; health to prevent disease, and self-government to overcome civic inertia.



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