



On February 25, 2014, USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah visited Buddha Secondary, a rural public school in Lalitpur district. Administrator Shah; Acting Assistant Administrator Denise Rollins; the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education's Planning Division; Mission Director Beth Dunford; and USAID Nepal staff were greeted with a traditional welcome song and flowers. Buddha School is included in the sample for the first nationally representative reading assessment in Nepal, funded by USAID.



EARLY GRADE READING: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE LEARNING

USAID has supported many initiatives to develop and improve education in Nepal from as early as the 1960s. Until recently, USAID, together with other donors, provided direct support to the Ministry of Education through the Early Childhood Education Development program to prepare Nepali children for basic education and to build the future workforce of Nepal. USAID is currently placing new emphasis on improving primary grade reading as the foundation for future learning after the government and donor-led School Sector Reform Program assessments found abysmal reading scores despite high primary school enrollment.

The Government of Nepal will soon roll out a five-year National Early Grade Reading Program in 2014, which will be led by USAID in its 20 focus districts in the Mid-West and Far-West regions. The program is expected to be implemented in part by Nepali organizations and through government-to-government funding.

Working together with the Ministry of Education, USAID's new education project will help young children acquire strong reading skills in grades one to three, while the national program will reach an additional four million children in over 30,000 schools.



The Early Grade Reading Assessment data collection utilizes Android-based tablets for quicker, cheaper, and more reliable assessment results. This first nationwide reading assessment will provide a baseline by which the effectiveness of the upcoming national reading program can be measured. At the Buddha Secondary School in Lele Village Development Committee, Dr. Rajiv Shah observed the tablets that are used to evaluate students' ability to recognize letters and sounds, identify words and demonstrate comprehension in timed trials.

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LOW-COST ANTISEPTIC GEL LOWERS THE RISK OF DEATH IN NEWBORN BABIES BY 23 PERCENT

Until recently, three in every one hundred Nepali babies died before they were 28 days old, often from infections of the newborn navel or umbilical cord stump. In fact, the mortality rate for Nepali newborns did not improve from 2006 to 2011, and deeply rooted cultural practices surrounding the care of the newborn's umbilical cord were seen as part of the problem.

In Nepal, three out of five babies are born at home, sometimes in unhygienic circumstances, and efforts to promote umbilical cord care were largely unsuccessful. Mothers and grandmothers using information handed down to them for generations would unknowingly contribute to infections in newborns, caused by treating the fresh umbilical stump with turmeric, mustard oil paste, even cow dung or vermilion, a bright red cosmetic that is actually a powdered form of mercury — a highly toxic substance.

2011 saw the successful conclusion of a USAID-funded study in Nepal on the use of Chlorhexidine Digluconate (CHX), an antiseptic lotion used to reduce infections in newborn babies. Working with the National Institutes of Health and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID supported clinical trials of CHX first in liquid form, and

then as a gel.

Findings from the CHX pilot project revealed that a one-time application of the low-cost antiseptic gel cuts the risk of infant death by 23 percent. With the impressive pilot test results in hand, the Government of Nepal became the first country in the world to adopt CHX for newborn cord care, approving it as part of an essential newborn care package in December 2011. The use of this antiseptic has been widely accepted in the country thanks to vigorous public outreach and education, along with the committed network of 50,000 trained Female Community Health Volunteers.

USAID's support for CHX in Nepal is a strong example not only of scaling up an innovative, life-saving treatment, but also of a true public-private partnership. Lomus Pharmaceuticals, a Nepali company, progressively became engaged as a partner to USAID and the Ministry of Health and Population to manufacture and supply CHX, initially for research and later for piloting.

With Nepal's results, other developing countries like Nigeria and Madagascar are now in various stages of implementing the scale-up of CHX in their health programs.

AN INNOVATIVE RESPONSE TO SAVING YOUNG LIVES



A health worker applies chlorhexidine to the cord of a newborn baby born in the Banke district health facility. Picture: USAID Nepal Family Health Program II

USAID RECOGNIZES THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP IN SAVING NEWBORN LIVES

In recognition of the life-saving partnership between the Government of Nepal and USAID, Administrator Rajiv Shah presented the first USAID Pioneers Prize to the Government of Nepal for its leadership in the Chlorhexidine Cord Care Program, during his visit to Kathmandu. The project is one of seven to receive the award globally, honoring excellence in the use of science, technology, and innovation to solve development challenges. USAID presented the award to the Government of Nepal Ministry of Health and Population at the 'Showcasing Nepal's Health Innovations and Partnerships' event on Wednesday, February 26.

Picture: Dr. Rajiv Shah presents the USAID Pioneers Prize 2013 to Dr. Praveen Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population.



Thirty-five-year-old Gita Parajuli, a female health care volunteer at Ugratara village development committee in Kavre, was demonstrating the application of the gel on a newborn baby doll, the way she would teach a pregnant woman in her ward.

At Dhulikhel Hospital, the nurse in charge, Indira Shrestha, applied the product on a three-hour-old baby.

Chlorhexidine is a chemical compound usually found in disinfectants. Since 2009 the antiseptic has been manufactured and used in Nepal in its gel form to prevent umbilical cord infections in neonates. Through the national network of around 52,000 female health care volunteers like Parajuli, the antiseptic currently reaches newborns in 41 districts, slashing neonatal deaths by 23 percent-- a feat the administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Rajiv Shah, who was on a two-day visit of the country, formally recognised on Wednesday.

At an event organised in the Capital, Shah presented the USAID Pioneers Prize to the Secretary of Ministry of Health and Population, Praveen Mishra. Impressed with the results delivered by the collective efforts of the Ministry, Lomus Pharmaceuticals which produces the gel, the community of female volunteers and the USAID, Shah said, "Ending preventable child deaths is achievable, but it

requires all of our efforts."

Nepal has a high neonatal mortality at 33 per 1,000 births, according to the 2011 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey. The rate has not changed since 1996.

With umbilical cord sepsis causing most of the deaths, a randomised control trial was conducted in Sarlahi in 2005, with support from the USAID. The test results showed that around 6,000 babies can be saved every year if chlorhexidine is applied on the navel immediately after the cord is severed. Subsequently in 2011, the government approved to extend the project to 65 districts by 2015.

By the next three years, partners in the project plan to reach newborns in all 75 districts.

"Since two-thirds of the deliveries occur at home and the rest at unhygienic birthing centres, most babies in Nepal develop umbilical cord infections," said Leela Khanal, Project Manager of Chlorhexidine Navel Cord Care Project. She explained traditional application of turmeric and mustard oil paste, vermilion powder, ashes, or cow dung would only increase chances of navel sepsis instead of preventing it.

Studies carried out at the Thapathali maternity hospital and in Banke between 2008-2009 show that the benefits of the chlorhexidine gel lie in its efficacy: low cost (Rs 18 for a 3-gram tube) and high communal acceptability. The product,

MADE IN NEPAL PANACEA TO UMBILICAL CORD SEPSIS

By Weena Pun |

The article was published in the Kathmandu Post on March 3, 2014

manufactured locally by Lomus, has to be applied only once, the sooner the better. It also sticks to baby's skin, without getting absorbed, so that bathing the newborn will not reduce the antiseptic's effect. And it does not cause any side effects on infants, such as skin rashes often induced by other antiseptic lotions.

The role of the gel in saving neonatal lives has been so phenomenal that Lomus now supplies chlorhexidine tubes to Nigeria, Liberia and Madagascar. "Since 2012, we have shipped 240,000 tubes outside of Nepal," said Prajwal Jung Pandey, marketing director at Lomus.

“Every Nation Must Take Its Own Path To Prosperity”



This is an excerpt of the speech Dr. Shah delivered at the Nepal Economic Summit 2014.

INTRODUCTION — AN IMPORTANT MOMENT

It is an honor to visit Nepal and have the opportunity to see firsthand the extraordinary progress of one of USAID's closest development partners.

Over the last few days, I've walked around the historic Patan neighborhood to see how communities are constructing safer buildings to withstand earthquakes. I've met local scientists who are harnessing satellite remote sensing data to help communities adapt to climate change—so that farmers can estimate crop yields and plan ahead. And I joined the Minister of Health to present an award to the team that developed chlorhexidine—a live-saving medical gel that was created right here in Nepal and has cut the risk of infant death by 23 percent.

It has not been hard to see why Nepal has been only one of just eight fragile states to have successfully halved extreme poverty ahead of the 2015 target for the Millennium Development Goal.

It didn't take two decades—or even ten years. In just seven years, between 2003 and 2011, the extreme poverty rate fell from 53 percent to 24.8 percent. Enabling a new generation of Nepalese children to grow up in dignity and security—knowing they'll have a fair shot in their future. This is extraordinary. After more than a decade of insurgency and post-conflict challenges, the political environment has stabilized, and a core focus on maternal and child health has cut maternal mortality in half over the last two decades.

This is—without a doubt—a unique and important moment for Nepal. Thanks to a history of progress and new advances in science and technology, Nepal stands within reach of ending extreme poverty and securing a foundation for long-term economic growth.

But this future is not inevitable. Today, almost 8 million Nepalis get by on less than \$1.25 a day. For them, every decision is a trade-off with potentially catastrophic consequences.

Do you buy medicines for a sick parent, provide an evening meal for your children, or put a few pennies away towards a new roof or next year's school fees? These questions are an everyday reality, especially for Nepal's subsistence farmers, for whom extreme poverty is not just a statistic—but a drain on their basic human dignity.

We know we can end extreme poverty for these 8 million Nepalis. We can end it for 26,000 children who die every year before the age of five. And we can end it for the 41 percent of all children who are stunted. But it will take partnership, innovation, and a strong commitment to policy reform. Indeed, it will take a new model of development.

NEW MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

If the old model of development was hiring a contractor to build a road, the new model of development is partnering with the engines of growth—from companies to local entrepreneurs—to build inclusive economies and vibrant civil societies. In other words, we have to put the power of business and innovation into the hands of those who serve this mission...whether it is partnering with scientists to protect against earthquakes...or working with a local company to scale new solutions in nutrition to ensure every child thrives.

Here in Nepal, we're working together to build high-impact partnerships to strengthen local capacity and build the thriving markets that will one day replace our assistance. Nowhere is this more important than in agricultural

development, which we know is one of the surest routes out of poverty. Since growth tied to gains in agricultural productivity is up to three times more effective at raising the incomes of the poor than growth from any other sector. This is absolutely true here in Nepal, where 75 percent of the population makes its livelihoods in agriculture. That's why we are working through President Obama's global food security initiative Feed the Future to improve nutrition and incomes for one million Nepalis. Armed with new research on high-yield, climate-resilient maize varieties from Nepali centers, we've trained over 200 community groups in the seed production—including field inspection and post harvest management. Perhaps most exciting, several of these groups have even grown to become full-fledged private seed companies. As a result, 50,000 rural families have generated an additional 1 million dollars in sales—as maize yields nationwide have improved by 36 percent.

“It will be the people of Nepal and their leadership that determine how fast and how far this beautiful and enterprising nation will travel. It will be Nepali dedication and talent that will unleash broader prosperity. And it will be Nepali skills that weave a stronger fabric that lifts all Nepalis out of extreme poverty. We look forward to working closely with leaders in this room and across the country not simply with our development investment alone, but by bringing together innovators and entrepreneurs from both of our nations to brighten the future of generations to come.” -

Dr. Rajiv Shah's Closing Speech at the FNCCI Nepal Economic Summit

But raising incomes means little if families don't have access to loans to grow their businesses or bank accounts to help save money for school fees. By partnering with local banks, we've helped expand mobile banking services—and give families the opportunity to pay loans, transfer money, or receive their salary right on their phone. In the last year alone, banks served more than 19,000 new clients and disbursed over \$2.3 million in rural loans to almost 8,000 borrowers—most of whom were women. Today, Nepali private sector leaders estimate that mobile financial services will reach all 75 districts within five years—enormous progress in a country where 70 percent of Nepali families don't have a bank account.

We also partnered with a local company called Lomas Pharmaceuticals to accelerate progress in ending preventable child death. Because—the truth is—that even as we've seen enormous progress in some areas, the mortality rate for newborn infants here in Nepal has not improved for several years.

In 2005, we supported a randomized control trial that showed that we could cut neonatal deaths by 23 percent with the use of a 7.1 percent chlorhexidine solution that's applied to the umbilical cord immediately after it's cut. Based on these findings, we are working with the Ministry of Health and Population to bring chlorhexidine to newborns to nearly all of Nepal's districts over the next three years.

Chlorhexidine is just one example of the power of science and innovation to solve seemingly intractable challenges in development. We're also harnessing cutting-edge technology to strengthen Nepal's resilience to climate change and potentially devastating shocks—like earthquakes and droughts—that can set back hard-won development gains.

As many of you know, Nepal is the 14th most vulnerable country in the world to climate change. Which means the slightest rise in temperature—or the briefest change in rainfall has the potential to affect millions of people, casting them back to the brink of poverty. In a partnership with local scientists and the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration—called SERVIR—we are harnessing satellite data to help policymakers and local communities plan ahead. Armed with remote sensing data, farmers can estimate the season's crop yields and local leaders can take steps to avoid famine. Scientists can identify which villages are most at risk for landslides or glacial floods. And forest officials can monitor forests for fires in real-time.

Today, over 250 forest officials from across Nepal currently receive fire alerts on their mobile phones—technology that is at the very cutting-edge of climate science.

ADVANCING POLICY REFORM

But business and technology alone are not enough to end extreme poverty or accelerate economic growth. Political leadership and policy reform are essential preconditions to driving investment where it will have the biggest impact on extreme poverty. Nepal's proactive approach to implementing pro-growth policies have been instrumental in the nation's progress—but there is more to be done.

Despite the nation's well-known hydropower potential, for instance, the sector remains woefully under-developed. Today, only 705 megawatts of electric generation capacity have been developed—a small fraction of Nepal's potential. The government had made great strides in enacting coherent policies to develop hydropower, but important reforms are still needed.

Similar reform is needed in the nation's seed policies to allow greater private sector participation in the development and marketing of seeds. This includes simplifying seed registration procedures and compensation guidelines—policies that have been prepared with our support, but not yet implemented.

We know that policy reforms are not easy. Cracking down on corruption and nepotism is not easy. Cutting off the vested interests in state monopolies is not easy. Raising prices on fuel is not easy. But these steps will help pave the way for sustainable economic growth—the very growth Nepal needs to lift millions from extreme poverty.

CONCLUSION: TAKING ITS OWN PATH TO PROSPERITY

Six decades ago, Nepal and the United States first came together to build a new future for all Nepalis. We lay Nepal's first roads and installed its first telephone exchange.

And though our commitment remains just as strong today, we know that every nation must pursue its own path to prosperity.

It will be the people of Nepal and their leadership that determine how fast and how far this beautiful and enterprising nation will travel. It will be Nepali dedication and talent that will unleash broader prosperity. And it will be Nepali skills that weave a stronger fabric that lifts all Nepalis out of extreme poverty.

We look forward to working closely with leaders in this room and across the country...not simply with our development investment alone, but by bringing together innovators and entrepreneurs from both of our nations to brighten the future of generations to come.

Thank you.

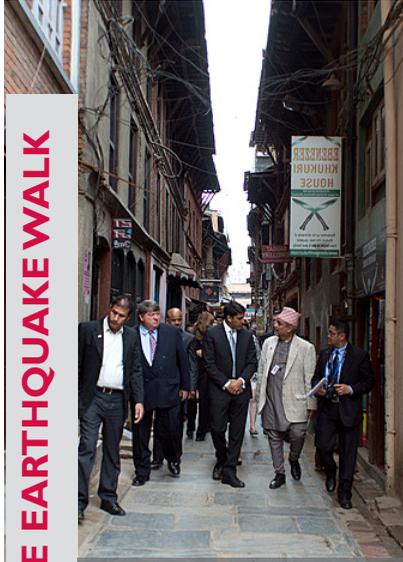
[Click here to watch Dr. Shah speak at Nepal Economic Summit.](#)



PATAN DURBAR SQ.

Dr. Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator, started his two-day Nepal visit on February 25 with a quick visit of the Patan Durbar Square, one of the three royal cities within the Kathmandu Valley.

Dr. Shah was keen on knowing the cultural and historical significance of the work-in-progress at Patan's Sundari Chowk or the Beautiful Courtyard. This work was funded through the U.S. Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund. The ancient courtyard is a striking example of traditional Nepali architecture, wood carving and stone sculpture dating back to 1647.



THE EARTHQUAKE WALK

Dr. Shah observed the retrofitted building of the Tri Padma Higher Secondary School in Patan. USAID programs have been instrumental in school safety education and safety and evacuation drills are conducted regularly. He also watched the "Red Panda" video on earthquake preparedness, which was produced with support from the U.S. Government in Nepal.

The Kathmandu Valley and surrounding areas lie in one of the most seismic zones in the world posing a serious threat to the lives of the people and infrastructure. The Earthquake Vulnerability Tour highlighted the assistance provided through USAID to communities to reduce their earthquake vulnerability and increased resilience.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM DR. RAJIV SHAH'S VISIT



@ SERVIR HIMALAYA

Dr. Shah experienced firsthand the dynamic developments underway through a joint USAID, NASA, and International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) initiative called SERVIR Himalaya. SERVIR Himalaya's purpose is to improve environmental decision-making in the Hindu-Kush Himalaya region through the information gathered and analyzed from earth observation information.

Dr. Shah also participated on a high-level panel to discuss how science, technology, innovation, and partnerships can be used to better inform development decisions made within Nepal and increase regional cooperation for development throughout South Asia. During the program, Dr. Shah said, "Over time, if you don't have a science-based development policy, you will be ineffective to dramatically reduce poverty." (Watch the video - [Dr. Shah at ICIMOD](#))



OBSERVING LOCAL FARM IN LELE

In Lele Village Development Committee, Dr. Shah observed small-scale commercial vegetable production and private sector involvement. Ram Prasad Timilsina (picture above), a local farmer in Lele, said he has minimized the use of chemical fertilizers over the past four years after coming to know of the Integrated Pest Management technology. During Dr. Rajiv Shah's visit to his farm, Timilsina also demonstrated his drip irrigation system and explained how it has proved beneficial in growing off-season crops. USAID supported over 85,000 smallholder farmers in 26 remote, conflict-affected districts to adopt improved farming techniques. USAID's work has increased the incomes of 430,000 rural farmers (54 percent women) by over 50 percent.

MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER

Dr. Shah met with Nepal's newly appointed Prime Minister, Sushil Koirala. In a historic election in November 2013 with the highest voter participation ever, Koirala's Nepali Congress Party won with a majority. Dr. Shah was accompanied by U.S. Ambassador to Nepal Peter W. Bodde and USAID/Nepal Mission Director Dr. Beth Dunford. The meeting was an opportunity to reiterate the importance of long-standing development relationship between USAID and Nepal, and advance Agency and host-country goals for inclusive economic growth.



BRIEFING ON HYDROPOWER

Dr. Rajiv Shah had an informational briefing on the status of Nepal's energy situation, the key challenges and the key steps for hydropower development in the country.

All Photos by Bibek Bhandari and Suraj Shaky, USAID

ISIT TO NEPAL (FEBRUARY 25 - 26, 2014)



"Showcasing Nepal's Health Innovations and Partnerships" Fair

The health fair, organized by USAID Nepal, was a sneak peak at the Mission's efforts and collaborations to promote innovations and technology in the country's health sector: (L) Dr. Rajiv Shah along with Nepal's Health Secretary, Dr. Praveen Mishra, light the Nepali oil lamp, as a traditional start to "Nepal's Health Innovations and Partnerships" fair.



Acknowledging the role of Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) in helping end preventable child and maternal deaths, and their relentless service to the community, Dr. Shah presented the two health workers at the fair with a traditional Nepali shawl. FCHVs have been an instrumental force in community-based health interventions – including distribution of Oral Rehydration Salt for diarrhoea, Vitamin A and pneumonia treatment – which have helped reduce under-five mortality by more than 50 percent in the last 15 years. The Government of Nepal started the FCHV program in 1988 with support from USAID, UNICEF, UNFPA and local non-governmental organizations – what started as a community-based project is now a public health sector's national pride.



With pre-eclampsia and eclampsia a leading cause of maternal death in Nepal, Jhpiego, in coordination with the Johns Hopkins Center for Bioengineering Innovation and Design, is testing an improved and affordable innovation that women can use at home. Dr. Kusum Thapa, Jhpiego's Regional Technical Advisor, explained to Dr. Shah the benefits of this new test and how it is efficient compared to the dipstick method currently in use.



From the vitamin A revolution to umbilical cord cleansing with Chlorhexidine, Nepal Nutrition Intervention Project – Sarlahi (NNIPS) has produced noteworthy health discoveries that have become the basis for establishment of new national health policies and the launching of programs both nationally and globally. Steven C. LeClerq, Field Director of NNIPS and JHU Representative to Nepal talked to Dr. Shah about the organization's research, which has served as the basis for formulating national health policies that can direct the development of national programs benefiting thousands of people.



Considered as South Asia's most advanced digital health mapping system, Nepal's GIS mapping system will help answer key questions that could be used for important decision making and policy reforms. According to Madhav Adhikari, a GIS Expert at the South Asia Institute for Policy Analysis and Leadership, the highly interactive map will also provide scientific data on roads, locations of health services and workers in relationship with population and health service centers.

Eye in the Sky Moves Mountains in Development A Blog by Richard Nyberg, Senior Regional Development Outreach and Communications Advisor, USAID/RDMA

When Him Lal Shrestha wants to know what is happening on the ground affecting Nepalese farmers, he shoots a glance up – way up to an orbiting satellite. That great big white ball on the top of his building helps bring life-saving data down to earth. Here's how.

Shrestha is a Remote Sensing Analyst at the USAID-funded SERVIR Himalaya initiative. He showed me around his facility and explained how satellite imagery can tell us what is happening to land in Nepal and across the countries surrounding the scenic Hindu Kush Himalayas.

Pointing to his screen, he explains how land cover, particularly in agriculture and forest, in many areas of Nepal is being depleted – a serious issue that will affect how local people plant, harvest and survive. It's also a huge concern for government officials who are trying to thwart potential calamities that could further make things tougher for people just trying to make ends meet.

Shrestha describes what he sees on his screen. "In the case of Nepal, from 1990 to the current year, we see remarkable pressure on the land cover changes," he said. "Land cover is a function of population growth; because of population growth, there is urbanization. So ultimately there is pressure on the forest coverage," he said, adding that the survey work is important internationally because "we are discussing reducing emission from the deforestation and degradation."

Helping people understand forest cover and other development challenges at home and across borders is the goal of this USAID effort in partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Some of the tools help people detect forest fires hidden behind mountain ranges and send SMS messages to fire fighters so they can speed off in pursuit in less than an hour.

"It is hard to fix a problem that you cannot see," said USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah after a recent visit to Nepal. Dr. Shah believes that by harnessing science and technology, "we can put critical information in the hands of the people most affected by natural disasters."

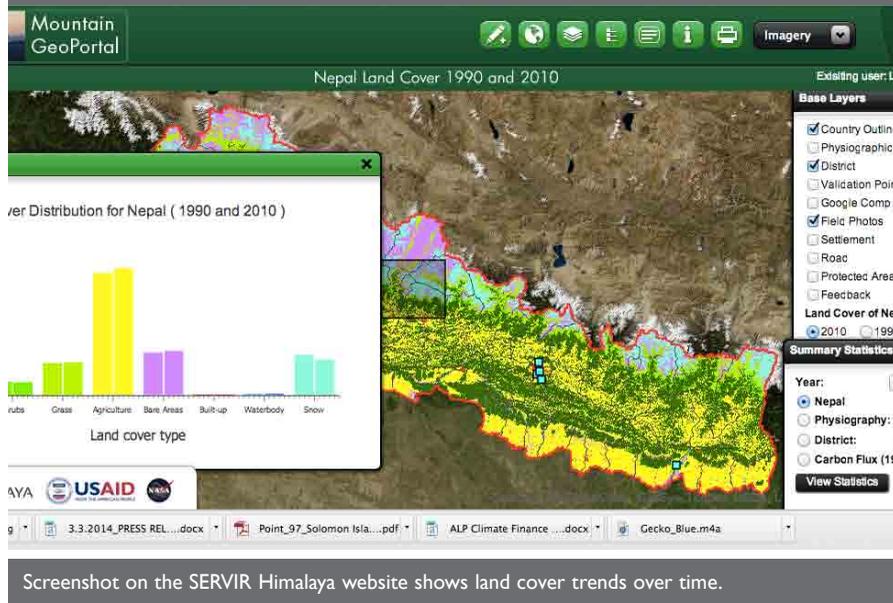
Other tools keep a big eye on glacier melts leading to water flows and help monitor food production and estimate crop yields so governments working with communities can avoid famine and all the suffering that comes with it.

According to Bronwyn Llewellyn, Environment Team Leader at USAID Nepal, a lack of transparency in decision-making is an issue to tackle across the region. "Science and technology can help a lot with that transparency. It's a tool that is accessed by everyone online. By creating tools that cross boundaries, you are creating a language of science that can be used across the borders. So everyone is looking at the same tool and making the same decisions."

So what's USAID's vision for this science-based development mapping toolkit? Governments across the region need the big picture. And they need the eye in the sky to help them see it.



THE WORLD IN HIS HAND: Him Lal Shrestha, a Remote Sensing Analyst at the USAID-funded SERVIR Himalaya initiative, explains how data is transmitted from a satellite and informs governments on how best to make use of their land. Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID



Screenshot on the SERVIR Himalaya website shows land cover trends over time.

WHAT IS SERVIR-HIMALAYA?

Established in October 2010, SERVIR-Himalaya was created to bring together NASA's satellite data with International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)'s scientists to develop tools that find innovative solutions to meet development needs. Connecting information from space to village, NASA, USAID, and ICIMOD use Earth observation and geospatial technology to support development decision-making.

SERVIR-Himalaya responds to the needs of developing nations as they adapt to changes in the region, build resilience to climate change, and strive to secure food, water, forests, and energy for their citizens. SERVIR strengthens the capacity of governments and other development stakeholders as they respond to natural disasters, work to improve food security, safeguard human health, manage water and natural resources. Improved management of natural resources also helps to identify opportunities to improve economic growth while lowering greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience to climate change.

SERVIR Himalaya's "SMS Forest Fire Detection and Monitoring System with Web-Based Application" was awarded an Honorable Mention in this year's USAID Office of Science and Technology Pioneer prize.

QUICK FACTS

The USAID and NASA SERVIR partnership has three existing hubs in key regions (Mesoamerica, East and Southern Africa, and the Hindu Kush-Himalaya). The program plans to expand to the Mekong and West Africa.

The area covered by SERVIR-Himalaya is a source of water, ecosystem services and livelihoods for over 210 million people in the mountains and 1.3 billion downstream.

SERVIR-Himalaya has already developed and piloted some scientific decision-making tools such as: water and climate disaster forecasts, land cover mapping, and forest fire SMS tools.

Find out more at: www.servirglobal.net

So, how can data analyzed through SERVIR help?

One example is that scientists can identify which villages are most at risk for landslides or glacial floods.



Imja Glacier in 1956

Glacial Lakes are formed when warming temperatures cause glaciers to melt faster than they can drain. Imja Lake, located in the Khumbu region, has experienced particularly rapid growth in area and volume since the early 1960s, leading to concern over the risk of a catastrophic Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) event. More than 7,500 people would be directly affected if Imja experiences a GLOF, with the economic damage reaching far beyond the watershed. (Photo by Erwin Schneider, Courtesy of the Association for Comparative Alpine Research, Munich)



Imja Lake in 2012

By 2012, the Imja glacier had receded dramatically, leaving behind a lake 110 m deep and containing over 60 million cubic meters of water. The glacier terminus is still actively calving, a process that in recent years has accelerated.

USAID is working with the communities throughout Nepal, including in the Khumbu region, to reduce their vulnerability to and increase their awareness of climate change and disasters such as a GLOF. The primary way we are doing this is providing information on the real dangers, and real solutions, and by helping guide the communities through assessing their unique vulnerabilities, identifying the people most at risk, and coming up with an actionable plan to reduce risk.

(Photo by Alton C. Byers, The Mountain Institute)

Trafficking and Labor Migration

Background: Each year thousands of Nepalis are trafficked internally as well as overseas for labor or commercial sexual exploitation. The U.S. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report lists Nepal as a Tier II country. Nepal's status quo has remained as Tier II for several years but if the Government of Nepal now fails to demonstrate progress, there is a real danger of Nepal slipping to the "Tier 2 Watch List". Without successful action by the Government to fight trafficking, some of the U.S. Government's larger foreign assistance programs in Nepal may be automatically cut. Though critical to Nepal's economy, with overseas employment generating a quarter of Nepal's GDP in remittances, migration comes with high risks. Migrants who willingly seek work in low-skilled sectors in the Gulf countries, Israel, Lebanon, India, Malaysia, and South Korea may subsequently face conditions indicative of forced labor, such as withholding of passports, nonpayment of wages, threats, and physical or sexual abuse. In many cases, this forced labor is facilitated by unscrupulous Nepal-based labor brokers and manpower agencies charging high recruitment fees. Nepalis often take out loans at very high interest rates from informal channels to fund their travel. Unregistered migrants using informal channels, traveling via India and/or relying on independent recruiting agents, are more vulnerable to forced labor and human rights violations.

USAID's five-year, \$6.8 million Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) project takes a holistic approach to protection, prosecution, prevention, and partnerships to reduce TIP. It is the largest of any donor funded TIP program. CTIP is implemented by The Asia Foundation and its 14 partners in six TIP-prone districts identified by the Government of Nepal as source, transit, and destination districts. Those districts are Kanchanpur and Banke in the Far and Mid-West as well as Kathmandu and its surrounding districts of Makwanpur, Sindhupalchowk, and Kavrepalanchowk. Because labor migration and trafficking are interrelated, CTIP addresses labor migration throughout its programming and relies on partnerships with government and civil society to achieve results. Specifically, CTIP formed and supports 250 Safe Migration Networks in all six project implementation districts. These networks act as frontline information and support units working to prevent human trafficking and promote safe labor migration at the community level.

USAID recently collaborated with the Ministry of Education to integrate information on safe labor migration and career counselling into the vocational education curriculum of 82 public schools. CTIP also strengthens local partners' capacity to provide safe migration services, including psychosocial counseling and support to survivors and their families and communities.

QUICK FACTS

- An estimated 3-4 million people are employed abroad, half of them in India.
- 50 percent of labor migrants have at least a secondary school education, but a majority engages in unskilled work.
- Remittances, mostly from India, the Gulf, and Malaysia, make up at least one-quarter of GDP and totaled \$5.4 billion in 2013.
- In 2012, the Government of Nepal banned Nepali women under 30 from labor migration due to safety concerns.
- By the end of 2013, female labor migration increased by 9 percent.
- Nepalis circumvent national labor migration safeguards by traveling undetected through the open border with India and onward to work in the Gulf.

Administrator Shah's Roundtable with Trafficking Survivors and Anti-Trafficking Government Leaders

The five-member panel began with firsthand accounts experienced by trafficking survivors. The first survivor to speak formed Nepal's first anti-TIP NGO, *Shakti Samuha*, run by trafficking survivors. The second survivor was recently sheltered by the CTIP-supported NGO *Pourakhi* and volunteered to tell her story. The other panelists included a public health specialist from the American Himalayan Foundation, Dr. Aruna Uprety; Dr. Kiran Rupakhetee, Under Secretary; and Mr. Krishna Hari Pushkar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labor and Employment. Following are the major points of discussion:



Labor Migration and Risks of Trafficking

Because Nepal's most valuable export is labor, the Government of Nepal recognizes the need to improve its performance on combating TIP, and has taken significant steps to reduce vulnerabilities of at-risk labor migrants. An estimated three to four million people are employed abroad, half of them in India. Due to lack of viable employment opportunities in Nepal, over 400,000 of the 530,000 new entrants to the labor market emigrate every year.

Victim Protection and Repatriation Process

The lack of support for rehabilitation and reintegration for survivors further increases their vulnerability to predatory labor migration practices. Addressing the issue requires coordinated inter-ministerial intervention to develop victim-centric policies and services for survivors' successful repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Survivors, especially women, face socio-economic and political barriers to obtaining needed services and prevent from being re-victimized.

THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS LABOR TRAFFICKING

The Government of Nepal's (GON) primary legal framework for addressing trafficking is the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act of 2007. The National Committee for Controlling Human Trafficking, part of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, coordinates the GON's anti-trafficking efforts. The government recently endorsed the National Minimum Standards for Victim

Good Governance Barriers to Improving the Economy Also Impact Trafficking

Chronic political instability, bureaucratic delays and overregulation, an inefficient judicial system, corruption, poor infrastructure, perennial power shortages, and labor strikes have resulted in low levels of private investment. More could be done to improve the local economy and prevent Nepalis from migrating and risk being trafficked. Public-private partnerships and new technologies could be explored.

Mobile Money Potential in Nepal

Mobile technology to access credit or transfer and save remittances could make migration safer and more beneficial for workers and their families. Across the country, although 70% of Nepalis are "unbanked," another 70% have mobile phone access. Mobile money offers great potential. To fund their migration, the majority of labor migrants use informal channels for high-interest loans that could be avoided through mobile banking. With USAID support, Nepal launched mobile money technology in the agriculture sector to provide a safe, secure, and convenient mechanism that could be extended to labor migrants and their families to conduct financial transactions.

Care and Protection and the Standard Operating Procedures for Rehabilitation Homes. The judiciary recently ruled in several landmark trafficking decisions, sentencing a defendant to 170 years in prison in one case, and upholding a victim's right to "adequate compensation" in another.

The GON's efforts to address labor trafficking and adopt measures to protect the rights of migrants include the Foreign Employment Act of 2007, other national laws bilateral agreements, and international

Technology to Combat TIP:

Technologies have the potential to reach more survivors, support safe migration, and offer vetted resources to vulnerable communities with insight about how and where trafficking occurs. Anti-TIP interventions include hotlines and supply-chain transparency for transformative impact on TIP. A USAID/Albania-supported Android app, "Safe from Sale," enables users to message the national trafficking hotline and obtain TIP and victim services information. On the supply-chain side, USAID-supported Labor Link offer mobile platforms that give companies real-time data from their suppliers, and likewise provides workers and farmers a voice to report on workplace conditions. USAID's Campus Challenge first place winner "Abolishop" informs online consumers on their items' use of slave labor.

conventions. In 2012, the GON adopted national-level policy reforms with the endorsement of the Foreign Employment Policy and began intervening to address labor migration issues under the larger purview of the anti-human trafficking framework. For example, in January 2013 the Department of Employment penalized 30 migrant worker orientation centers for issuing certificates without providing pre-departure counseling to migrant workers.

USAID ANNOUNCES FIVE NEW ACTIVITIES TO ADVANCE A MORE PROSPEROUS, RESILIENT, DEMOCRATIC NEPAL

USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah announced approximately \$100 million in support of the people of Nepal, subject to the availability of funding.



At a press roundtable on February 26, 2014, Dr. Shah announced the following activities to be implemented over the next five years:

-- **Up to \$70 million Community Resilience Program** integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into an expansion and deepening of USAID's food and nutrition security efforts in Nepal. A quarter of Nepal's population lives below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day, and this program will benefit an estimated 5 million of the most vulnerable in Nepal's hill regions. It will also support the Government of Nepal's efforts to

strengthen community resilience and stimulate inclusive growth.

-- **Five-year, \$20 million support to the National Early Grade Reading Program.** Under Ministry of Education leadership, USAID aims to improve the reading skills of more than one million children in grades 1 to 3 in twenty districts in the Mid- and Far-Western regions. USAID is now conducting the first-ever nationwide Early Grade Reading Assessment, creating a baseline against which to measure improved reading skills.

-- **Three-year, \$4.1 million Business Literacy Project** will operate in twenty Terai and lower hill districts in the Far-Western, Mid-Western, and Western Regions, complementing ongoing Feed the Future agriculture and nutrition activities. The project will build the literacy, numeracy, life and business skills of an estimated 48,000 women, youth, disadvantaged groups, and ethnic minorities so that they can run small-scale enterprises, access public services, and participate in the economy.

-- **\$10 million partnership between USAID, DFID and the Government of Nepal** will help increase access to family planning services for some of Nepal's most excluded households. This program is expected to become a model for expanding health care to hard-to-reach groups.

-- **\$500,000 Innovative Early Warning Flooding System** USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance will fund an early warning system to help protect communities in the Mid- and Far West regions from flooding. The project will install gauges along flood-prone rivers and share data in real time with district authorities using SMS and email. This will help save lives and livelihoods in the event of a pending event.

UPCOMING USAID NEPAL PUBLIC EVENTS

Interested in participating? Let us know. Email - usaidnepal@usaid.gov

June 4 - 12, 2014: This year, to commemorate World Environment Day, we are hosting a series of events over the course of one-week at the City Museum Kathmandu. The events are designed to uniquely bring together policy discourses to the public, to link global issues with local and vice versa, and to create a space where the general public, from school students to civil society leaders, can participate in a much-needed discussions and actions on climate change and environment conservation.

Events during the week are designed to also reflect on and highlight the theme of climate resilient cities and urban centers. Nepal is the fastest urbanizing country in South Asia. It is critical that the country engages in a discourse on how we make this transition as climate resilient as possible.

May, 28, 2014: First-ever Global Menstruation Hygiene Day - stay tuned for more information!

Mid-July, 2014: Launch of the new National Early Grade Reading Program.

DECONSTRUCT

CLIMATE . CHANGE . IMPACT

This Earth and Environment Day, make your idea count – by art, content and design.

USAID, US Embassy and the Hariyo Ban Program invite entries for an info-graphic competition on climate change. Submit an info-graphic based on what you think climate change means for Nepal. You can link it with agriculture, forests, water, biodiversity, ecosystem or energy.

The contest is open to graphic designers and artists from ages 18 to 40. Selected entries will win exciting awards and be exhibited during a special week-long exhibition starting from June 5, in honor of Environment Day.

For contest details, background reading material, terms and conditions and eligibility criteria, please visit the following links:

<http://www.usaid.gov/nepal/newsroom>
www.wwfnepal.org

The last date for entries is 29 April 2014.








NEW VIDEO: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

In collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium, the U.S. Government brings to you the sixth part of a series of animated Public Service Announcement to promote disaster awareness and preparedness messages. For earlier series, log on to [USAID Nepal You tube channel](#).



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